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"Then the sallow oval between Ged's arms grew bright. It widened and spread, a rent in the darkness of the earth and night, a ripping open of the fabric of the world. Through it blazed a terrible brightness. And through that bright misshapen breach clambered something like a clot of black shadow, quick and hideous, and it leaped straight out at Ged's face."

Ursula K. Le Guin
A Wizard of Earthsea

DUNGEON ADVENTURE PLAYER REWARDS!

Take advantage of the RPGA's Player Rewards program by scoring points with the adventures from this issue of *Dungeon*! Each adventure is worth 2 D&D Player Rewards points, and remains active until 8/31/06.

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OFF THE BEATEN PATH

If *Dungeon* adventures could talk, an awful lot of them would be whining about our Adventure Paths hogging the spotlight. We can't help it. The Age of Worms was so exciting that it naturally dominated these editorials and a good number of covers over the course of the last year. A special event deserves special coverage, and now that the Age of Worms is behind us, we're enormously proud of what we've accomplished. Two years ago, the idea of running an Adventure Path installment in twelve consecutive issues would have seemed laughable and impossible. With a little planning, however, we managed to pull it off. It was only natural that we'd want to brag a little.

Those of you who followed the Age of Worms can be forgiven for giving the other adventures of the last year a little less attention, but I'd like to take a moment to flip through those twelve issues and mention some of the non-Age of Worms highlights you may have missed.

Dungeon #124, the same issue that included the Adventure Path kick-off, also featured "The Chambers of Antiquities," a new level of the monster dungeon "Maure Castle," which first appeared in this magazine in issue #112 and in 1984 as *Mordenkainen's Fantastic Adventure*, an A D&D module by Robert J. Kuntz and Gary Gygax. Kuntz will return later this year with "The Greater Halls," another new dungeon level in the classic style. The old-school map turnover for this latest epic appeared at Paizo just yesterday, and we're already drooling over the prospect of lots of PC deaths.

Eric L. Boyd's "Vampires of Waterdeep" three-issue Forgotten Realms Campaign Arc marked the long-awaited return of that venerable campaign setting to these pages after a prolonged absence. The debut installment, in issue #126, resulted in one of our best-selling issues of the year and set the stage for the revelation of classic details about the

Dungeon of the Crypt and the Fireplace Level, two classic locales under the City of Splendors.

"Shut-In," in *Dungeon* #128, marked the first feature-length appearance of *Dragon* Associate Editor Wesley Schneider and *Dungeon* Assistant Editor James Sutter to our pages, with a chilling adventure that makes an old woman seem more frightening than many of the fiends and monstrous beasts we normally publish. It's a short and sweet low-level urban adventure that can be incorporated easily into any campaign, and if you're not familiar with it, it's worth a look.

For some reason, most of the Eberron adventures we receive involve murder mysteries, and last year the setting provided two of our favorites in the form of "Murder in Oakbridge" (#129) by newcomer Uri Kurlianchik and "Chimes at Midnight" (in #133) by Nicolas Logue. Tito Leati brought us "The Palace of Plenty" (#130), the first *Oriental Adventures* scenario we've published in ages. All are well worth some time at your game table. Greg A. Vaughan, whose "The Coming Storm" in this issue pushes into the unexplored kingdoms of the World of Greyhawk, also visited his favorite setting in issue #131's exciting and memorable "Hateful Legacy."

It was a very good year.

We're now heading into the thrilling waters of the Savage Tide Adventure Path, which debuts in *Dungeon* #139. I'm already more excited about this one than I was about Age of Worms, because we learn so much each time we do one of these that they can't help but get better and better. But there will still be other cool stuff in the magazine.

In the meantime we've got three issues with no Adventure Path at all, which allows us to publish some of the best stand-alone adventures we've received in the last year. Get ready to take on a Challenge of Champions, to discover the hag-hidden secrets of the kingdom of Impiltur in the Forgotten Realms, and to once more brave the danger of the Mud Sorcerer's Tomb.

Adventure awaits!

ERIK

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Prison Mail

DUNGEON #133

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MONTE COOK'S DUNGEONCRAFT • DOWNER • MT. ZOGON

Everybody loves giants and dragons! So why not throw both of them into an adventure and squeeze the PCs in the middle of a titanic conflict between these prototypical D&D bad guys? That was the genesis of "Kings of the Rift," issue #133's installment of our now-concluded Age of Worms Adventure Path.

Kevin Carter's "Ill Made Graves" begins with the funeral of a Viking king, an opening so compelling that I decided to publish the adventure immediately, even if it meant killing off a sovereign from my beloved Greyhawk campaign (farewell, Lolgoff Bearhear, we hardly knew ye).

"Chimes at Midnight," by up-and-coming *Dungeon* superstar Nicolas Logue, is probably our best Eberron adventure to date, and a cracking mystery to boot. Don't tell him, but the character Nick played in our office Age of Worms campaign while visiting a few weeks back lasted exactly an hour into his second session, and now rests in the belly of an otyugh (farewell, Belgrak, we hardly knew ye).

Yes, #133 was a fine issue of *Dungeon*. Naturally, all this month's letters are about #134. Back issues are available at paizo.com.

Less Hack, More Yak!

I realize this letter may be somewhat late in coming, but I wanted to congratulate *Dungeon* and Richard Pett for what I feel is quite possibly one of the best adventures I've seen in the magazine.

"The Prince of Redhand" [*Dungeon* #131] is brilliant, especially part four—Prince Zeech's party. It is about time an adventure was written that focuses on interactions between PCs and NPCs in a social setting where melee is not a viable option.

I can only hope that in the future *Dungeon* is able to continue in this vein. An adventure of this sort appearing once per year would be a wonderful addition to the magazine.

C. Breslin
Irvine, CA

Our primary interest is in publishing great adventures, whether they come in the form of a giant hack-and-slash dungeon complex or an engaging murder mystery or a dinner party or whatever. When we put together the Age of Worms Adventure Path outline, we decided very early on that if every single one of the twelve installments was basically a dungeon crawl, players and DMs were going to go crazy with boredom. The best D&D campaigns mix fighting with NPC interaction, and the best Dungeon adventures feature both of them in healthy heaping portions.

Down With the Third Dimension!

Could you please refrain from using isometric maps in future issues? While they may be interesting to look at, it is difficult to properly draw the area on a battlemat since 1/4 of the area is concealed behind walls and other solid objects. It is also more difficult to see important features if they are likewise obscured.

With the current edition's focus on tabletop miniature battles, having maps that can be easily reproduced (drawn by the DM) for tabletop play are a great help. I do not have an isometric battlemat.

Otherwise, keep up the great work!

Ryan Henry
Via Email

Anyone who has a line on an isometric battlemat is encouraged to write to the magazine as quickly as possible, as that sounds like a truly cool DM tool. I'm going to chalk this one up to the old "damned if we do" category. For months readers have requested isometric maps, so it's only natural that once we start doing them we start to get complaints. That said, your point is very well taken. While an isometric map is often useful for showing 3D spatial relationships between dungeon levels, natural cliffs, or multi-tiered dungeon

NEXT MONTH IN DUNGEON

SIEGE OF THE SPIDER EATERS

by Tim and Eileen Connors

The village of Haven-Fara has a problem—it's been overrun with spiders that have been forced out of thier nearby lair. Now, the horrible arachnids have encased the village in webs. Yet could this spider problem be merely a symptom of something worse to come? A D&D adventure for 1st-level characters.

TEALPECK'S FLOOD

by Peter Vinogradov

Decades ago, the powerful wizard Tealpeck made a blood pact with the pit fiend Ibex. Now, someone must find a way to undo this folly before Tealpeck's lone descendant inherits a terrible fate. A D&D adventrue for 6th-level characters.

MAN FOREVER

by Jason Nelson-Brown

Lord Chauve-Souris gave up the adventuring life for that of a noble, yet something still haunts him from those early glory days. Rumors that he's actually a vampire have set the region on edge, and civil unrest now threatens a revolt that could devastate southern Impiltur. A FORGOTTEN REALMS adventure for 16th-level characters.

rooms, the fancy-schmancy three-dimensional approach shouldn't get in the way of the map's usefulness on the rather dreary two-dimensional battlemat. We'll look out for it in the future.

Iä Dungeon!

I just wanted to write you a brief letter in regards to Matthew Hope's adventure "And Madness Followed," in issue #134. I've been a long time fan of the works of Robert W. Chambers and H.P. Lovecraft, especially those stories that involve Hastur and the assorted trappings that accompany those tales. When I saw DUNGEON #134 on the magazine rack, the blurb about the King in Yellow immediately caught my eye. I thought to myself, "That can't mean THAT King in Yellow!" I was quite pleased to be wrong in this regard.

Mr. Hope has crafted an excellent adventure that seamlessly intertwines all the inherent creepiness of the King in Yellow with the fantasy adventure of D&D. As a DM who has used Hastur and the Pallid Mask in some of my own D&D games over the last two decades, I was very excited to see them appear in an adventure that is sure to win a few more fans (err... lost souls?) to the King. The sidebars add to the usefulness of the adventure by providing not only descriptive background color, but crunchy bits for the DM as well. It is adventures like these that make DUNGEON such a valuable aid to the DM. I know I plan on swapping out a few of my old Carcosa house rules with those introduced in "And Madness Followed." Kudos as well for including a selected bibliography for DMs looking for more information about the King in Yellow. In addition to those mentioned, I'd also suggest Pagan Publishing's *Delta Green: Countdown* sourcebook, which includes an excellent chapter on a slightly different way of using Hastur in a game setting.

Matthew Hope deserves a hearty round of applause. Excellent job, Matt! I thought I was the only DM twisted enough to use the Yellow Sign in my adventures. Excellent job as well to you folks at DUNGEON for publishing this adventure.

NEXT MONTH IN DRAGON

DEMONOMICON OF IGGWILV: KOSTCHTCHIE

by James Jacobs

Discover a rage powerful enough to bow even the heads of giants: Kostchtchie, Demon Prince of Wrath.

THE GIANTS OF XEN'DRIK

by Jason Bulmahn and Amber Scott

Savage drow and stone-hearted giants war in the depths of EBERRON's dark continent. A glimpse of the upcoming release, *Secrets of Xen'drik*.

WAYS TO TRAVEL THE WORLD

by Martin Ralya

Leave your horse behind and travel the world by ship, caravan, submersible, or even airship.

SERPENTS OF THE SEAS

by Morgan Peer and Tracey Peer

Three new dragons emerge from the depths to terrorize your campaign.

PLUS!

Ecology of the Annis Hag, Spellcraft, Bazaar of the Bizarre, Class Acts, Sage Advice, comics, and more.

While I have you, let me add my accolades to the pile in regards to the Age of Worms Adventure Path. The *Hand of Vecna*, the *Rod of Seven Parts*, and Kyuss AND Dragotha? It warms my old first edition heart. Bravo!

Michael R. Curtis
Via Email

Thanks for the heartfelt response, Michael! All of us on the staff are obsessive nerds about several things, and "weird" fiction and first edition D&D top the list! I was introduced to the work of Lovecraft, Moorcock, Leiber, and dozens more by DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, so running adventures and articles that point to the literary foundations of our hobby is just one way of paying back D&D for all of the great stories it's led me to over all these years. When James and I first started talking about this stuff years ago, we feared that we were in the minority of D&D fans in this regard, but if anything, enthusiastic letters like this one make us realize that we are legion.

Nostalgia For the Win!

First, Thanks for the great job you and all the crew have been doing for all of the D&D fans out there. It has been a great pleasure over the years for me since I was 12 years old. I ran many games at conventions and home for over 20 years. My love for the game continues even while being a father to my two daughters, with one diagnosed with autism (she helps me roll the dice). I still find time to DM the new Age of Worms Adventure Path.

Second, I never wrote all those years to either DUNGEON or DRAGON magazine, and have decided now because of the last "From the Editor" you wrote, in DUNGEON issue #134. It moved me—brought back memories for me. Made me realize how far the D&D game has come. After reading that I went to the *White Plume Mountain* module and looked at Dragotha on the map. I thought of times back then for me, and how the mythology for D&D has fascinated me. I felt as if I was there with you going through the old modules that I still have to this day. Looking through them again, I came across "Egg of the Phoenix." I had many different groups go through this classic. The Elemental Planes and their rulers (Imix, Ogrémoch, Olhydra, and Yan-C-Bin) were good times to really remember.

Third, I love how far D&D has come. I didn't like the new edition at first, but have come to accept the change and even now indulge in the new rules. They've made my life so much easier in running the game, especially with the use of miniatures. I was one not for change since first edition, but I did adjust. You and the crew at Paizo have made me believe that it's possible to see those old classic mythologies of D&D come back to life again. For that, Erik Mona, you will always have my support of D&D products and subscriptions to come.

Fred Savadge
Hazleton, Pennsylvania

Thanks, Fred! I've been very pleased with the response to that editorial, even though it did include a major error that shames me to this day. Dragotha actually appeared in DRAGON #134, not #135. I apologize to anyone who went hunting for that issue only to learn that I'm not quite as sharp with this stuff as I like to think!

My approach to D&D has always been that you don't have to ignore the past while moving into the future. Game elements like Dragotha, the Elemental Princes of Evil, Warduke, and in a strong sense the "core" campaign setting itself were present at the height of D&D's cultural signifigance. While setting part of the new Savage Tide Adventure Path on the Isle of Dread is a nice throwback to a classic D&D locale that makes the staff feel warm and fuzzy inside, the homage also ties it to one of the most successful D&D adventures of all time, a product that sold more than 2 million copies back in the 1980s. Simply speaking, there are few phrases with the impact of "Isle of Dread" upon 30-something gamers, an increasingly large segment of the active D&D audience.

For the new fans of the game, the Isle of Dread is a fun tropical locale filled with dinosaurs. For those of us who have been around a while, it's a cultural touchstone that ties back to our early memories and good times with the game and the hobby. New and old need not be mutually exclusive, as I hope the Age of Worms has made clear. That campaign has been the most popular feature ever published in DUNGEON, and it's our hope that the new Adventure Path, which kicks off in issue #139, will exceed even those lofty expectations. Me? I'm counting on it.—Erik Mona

Tensions Rising

BY RYAN SMALLEY
BY DAVID BIRCHAM
BY ROBERT LAZZARETTI

EBERRON | LOW-LEVEL (1ST–5TH) | TEMPERATE MOUNTAINS AND DUNGEON CRAWL

Aerdane d'Lyrandar, dragonmarked member of House Lyrandar, has uneventfully and successfully piloted his airship from Stormhome to Fairhaven dozens of times. His lucky streak just ended. A barrage of missiles downed Aerdane's vessel as it navigated along the edge of the Starpeaks less than a mile east of the hamlet of Dig's End. While House Lyrandar regrets the loss of its costly ship, it is more concerned with the fate of certain documents within Aerdane's cargo. If these papers become public knowledge, it could result in an embarrassing and potentially volatile political situation.

"Tensions Rising" is an EBERRON adventure designed for four 4th-level characters. While the adventure takes place near the Starpeaks of Aundair, you could easily place this adventure anywhere Lyrandar's airships traverse. For non-EBERRON campaigns, Aerdane's airship could represent a dangerous but potentially lucrative prototype for a new form of travel that must not be allowed to fall into the wrong hands.

Adventure Background

Captain Aerdane used an emergency scroll of *sending* to alert Stormhome shortly after his airship came under attack. House Lyrandar reacted to the distress call by ordering a number of airships to speed to Aerdane's last known location, but the closest vessel is more than three hundred miles and fifteen hours away. The only Lyrandar agent within the immediate vicinity is Juffrey the Pale, an abrasive wizard residing within Dig's End. Lyrandar's *sending* to Juffrey instructs him to locate and travel to the crash site without delay, a mission the wizard has no intention of accepting.

The missile barrage was the work of the necromancer Nef'haz, a Darguun mercenary hired to prevent Aerdane's ship from reaching its destination. Weeks ago, Nef'haz and his hired thugs established an encampment upon the Clawmark, a series of bluffs overlooking Aerdane's route. The mercenaries crafted makeshift ballistae with heavy wooden projectiles tipped with vials of alchemist's fire. When shot from Nef'haz's siege machines, the missiles struck Aerdane's ship with deadly effect. The airship's hull was so badly damaged that the vessel began to lose altitude at an alarming rate. Nef'haz's smug smile faded, however, as he watched Aerdane expertly pilot the vessel into the mouth of a chasm and disappear from view.

Nef'haz realized he had little time to waste. He knew from scouting expeditions that a complex network of tunnels connected the chasms, including the one into which Aerdane plummeted. Ill prepared for a descent into the gorge, Nef'haz and his thugs raced down the slopes and entered the subterranean warrens via a cave on the hillside overlooking Dig's End.

It was then that Nef'haz received a surprise of his own. An isolated tribe of dolgrims residing within the heart of the Starpeaks relies on fish from the chasm's underground river for food. The tribe frequently sends war parties to cull trout from fish channels carved into the rock. One such group, under the leadership of the dolgaunt Grubbok, arrived hours after Nef'haz completed his underground reconnaissance expedition. Grubbok has no intention of allowing the Darguun necromancer access to the important tribal food source. Confronted by these unexpected foes, Nef'haz launched a brutal attack against Grubbok's band in the hopes of overcoming the dolgrim resistance before Lyrandar reinforcements arrive.

The conflict allowed Aerdane, the lone survivor of the airship crash, to heal most of his wounds with potions from the airship's hold. Now the captain grimly awaits the arrival of the victors of the Nef'haz-Grubbok war. The hapless half-elf expects little mercy from either party.

Adventure Synopsis

The party is hired by Juffrey the Pale, the only local agent of House Lyrandar, to recover a collection of sensitive documents believed to be within the cargo of Aerdane d'Lyrandar's downed airship. The characters enter the labyrinthine complex and immediately find themselves enmeshed in a brutal battle between dolgrim warriors and the mercenaries that brought down Aerdane's vessel. The party may or may not side with either force, but neither the dolgaunt chieftain Grubbok nor the mercenary leader Nef'haz have any intention of honoring alliances once the battle is won. The characters make their way to the crash site, locate a fearful but determined Captain Aerdane d'Lyrandar, and defend him while he makes necessary repairs on his damaged airship. Once the work is completed, Aerdane and the party embark on a vertigo-inducing ascent through the narrow throat of the chasm while subjected to missile fire and crazed boarding attempts by all surviving enemies—mercenaries and dolgrim alike.

Adventure Hooks

The easiest way to begin "Tensions Rising" is to have Juffrey approach the party and ask them to embark on House Lyrandar business. The cowardly wizard is prepared to offer a portion of his reward to the party should they accept the mission. Juffrey, of course, has no intention of informing the party that the task is his to complete, but rather plans to collect Lyrandar's reward after the party accomplishes the mission and faces the perils involved.

A second possible hook has the characters witness Nef'haz's ballistae barrage on the airship from a distance. The party can safely assume the airship to be the property of House Lyrandar, but the characters have little idea as to the identities or motivations of its attackers. If you use this hook, the party witnesses Nef'haz and his band hastily disappear over a ridgeline after the ship plummets into one of the many chasms within the Clawmark.

Dig's End

Dig's End was founded in 961 YK shortly after a massive earthquake ripped through the region and left numerous chasms in its wake. Prospectors rushed to the region with the fervent hope that the geological event had uncovered precious minerals and, gods willing, dragonshards. Their wishes were in vain. Dig's End would have disappeared as quickly as it had blossomed if not for a few stalwart citizens who decided to set aside mining tools for farming implements. These common folk now live an idyllic (if boring) existence away from the hubbub of the larger communities of Aundair.

Dig's End (hamlet): Conventional; AL LN; Population 146; 100 gp limit; Assets 730 gp; Isolated (92% human, 5% dwarf, 2% half-elf, 1% other).

Authority Figure: **Wrenna Woodbarrow**, LN female human expert 4/commoner 1 (warden).

Important Characters: **Juffrey the Pale**, N male human wizard 7.

Juffrey's Offer

The retired adventurer Juffrey is one of the few residents of Dig's End to have accomplished something in life—at least according to him. The balding wizard bears an air of superiority as if he were the hamlet's founder and ruler, though he is neither. Having received an urgent directive from House Lyrandar Juffrey reluctantly departs his abode and walks the muddy streets of Dig's End seeking anyone who looks remotely capable of fulfilling the task given to him.

Read the following when the party first encounters Juffrey the Pale.

A pale, elderly man dressed in light reds and blues touches his bald head in greeting while nodding in your direction. A number of potion vials and wands are stuffed within the yellow sash at his waist. His nose is crooked and long, his eyes beady, and his teeth match his sash perfectly.

Juffrey greets the party warmly, and introduces himself as: "Juffrey the Pale, one-time soldier of Aundair and hero of the Battle of Windshire." After pausing for a moment to see if any of the PCs recognize his name or claims, he begs the party for a moment of their time, as they seem to be a capable group.

Juffrey changes his demeanor considerably if it appears the party wants nothing to do with him or his proposition. He remains haughty only so long as the situation allows, and his imperious tone can become pleading in the blink of an eye. Once the party agrees to listen, Juffrey suggests they travel to his modest two-story tower on the outskirts of town. This request is by no means a requirement, however, and the pompous wizard spills his tale in the middle of Dig's

End marketplace if such is what the party demands.

"I have, at times, worked directly and indirectly for House Lyrandar. I am certain you have heard of them, yes? Airships, bound elementals, all that? Good. An unfortunate accident has occurred but a short distance from this very spot. One of Lyrandar's airships crashed within the canyons east of town. While additional airships have been dispatched, they will not arrive for several hours. House Lyrandar asked me to find a suitable group willing to locate the crash site and offer what assistance they may to surviving crew members."

Juffrey's final sentence is, of course, a lie (Bluff +9). Juffrey has been personally assigned the task of recovering or safeguarding the documents within Aerdane's cargo, but desperately wants to find someone else to do the "dirty work." Lyrandar offered Juffrey 10,000 gp should he successfully recover the documents, though the wizard has no intention of informing the party of that fact. He initially offers the characters 4,000 gp but, if it appears they will decline the mission, goes as high as 8,000 gp. Juffrey intends to pay the party with funds currently on hand, and then collect the 10,000 gp reward when Lyrandar's airships arrive.

Juffrey is reluctant to discuss specifics until the party accepts the mission. If pressed, the wizard allows that the airship was most likely forced down by hostile fire and that reaching the vessel may prove dangerous.

If his dishonesty is revealed, Juffrey pleads with the party to assist him and offers to give the party the entire 10,000 gp promised by House Lyrandar.

Once the party accepts the mission, with or without the knowledge of Juffrey's deception, the wizard reveals what little he knows. Using the information provided to House Lyrandar by Aerdane during his frantic crash landing, Juffrey tells the party about the network of canyons and passageways in the hills east of Dig's End. The wizard provides directions to a small cave in a hillside approximately one mile from his home. The cave leads to a series of abandoned mining tunnels that connect the bases of most of the chasms. With luck, the PCs can use these caves to find the crashed airship.

Juffrey tells the party that House Lyrandar is concerned, of course, about its ship and crew, but is even more concerned about the contents of an iron strongbox that was part of Captain Aerdane's cargo. Within the strongbox are a number of sensitive documents, documents that cannot be allowed to fall into the wrong hands. He tells them to find the strongbox and return it to him without opening it. He offers the party one quarter of their reward up front, and the rest when they return the box with the seal intact.

Juffrey has never personally ventured into the tunnels and cannot offer any information regarding their layout. The wizard emphatically states that no one within Dig's End could provide further assistance to the party; he claims the mines are avoided due to their inherently shoddy construction. This is partially true; the chasms' strata shift several times yearly, and subterranean avalanches are not uncommon. Nonetheless, the frequent dolgrim presence is the real deterrent.

Juffrey mentions the dolgrims only under significant pressure. Likewise, he refuses to "speculate" as to how or why Aerdane's airship crashed, even though Stormhome told Juffrey that a number of ballista bolts brought the ship down.

Chapter One: Search and Rescue

East of Dig's End the land is rife with jagged canyons, as if some giant beast tore into the land with massive talons. The earth is rent in dozens of places, with parallel gorges marching east before disappearing into the higher elevations of the Starpeaks. Many of the gorges twist as they descend into the bowels of the earth, hiding their floors behind huge outcrops of stone and rocky overhangs. Without magical assistance, descending into the 300- to 1000-foot-deep chasms is an extremely dangerous proposition (Climb check DC 20). Since it is impossible to tell from above which chasm holds the crashed airship, approach from that avenue is a doubtful proposition at best.

Aerdane's chasm is 300 feet deep. While the top half is dry, the bottom 150 feet are slick with moisture seeping from cracks in the chasm's walls. An ancient earthquake diverted an underground river that now plummets 100 feet down the south side of the chasm before draining into the canyon floor. The roaring waterfall can be heard throughout the complex and typically applies penalties to Listen checks made in the area (see individual room descriptions for appropriate modifiers).

From mid-morning to early afternoon, enough sunlight reaches area **19** to provide shadowy illumination to the chasm base and overlooking ledges. The complex is otherwise dark, as neither Nef'haz' mercenaries nor Grubbok's dolgrims require light.

1. Entrance

The mountain rising above Dig's End splits here, forming a narrow cleft that extends into the foothills of the Starpeaks. A triangular cave entrance pierces the rock wall at the rear of the hollow. Small, thorny bushes dot the shale-covered ground within the cleft, and many have found purchase in the rocky ledges overlooking the area. The distant roar of a massive waterfall is barely audible.

Most of the shale and all of the brush have been cleared away from the cave opening. A character that makes a DC 10 Search check finds numerous footprints recently made within the hollow. The tracks spill down from the hillside and enter the cave without exiting again. A character with the Track feat can follow the tracks (DC 20 Survival check) up the 300-foot slope to eventually locate four crude ballistae within a copse of trees approximately one-half mile beyond the hillcrest.

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2. Natural Foyer

This circular room appears to have been artificially widened, as signs of tunneling are clearly visible on the walls and ceiling. Four passageways depart the chamber, one in each cardinal direction. A round boulder, perhaps five feet in diameter, rests just within the room nearest the east exit. The faint thunder of a massive waterfall seems to be coming from the north tunnel.

The floor of the room is a mixture of rock and mud, and numerous tracks wind throughout the area. A character that makes a DC 20 Search check can discern two distinct groups of tracks. One set was made by the large, booted feet of Nef'haz and his band. The dolgrim prints are smaller, and some are barefoot. A DC 20 Survival check (made by a character with the Track feat) allows a character to follow either set of tracks and reveals that the dolgrims trailed the mercenaries to the north.

The boulder is large enough to completely conceal the east tunnel when rolled in front of the exit (DC 15 Strength check). Nef'haz is unaware of the east passage, as the boulder concealed its entrance both times the mercenaries passed through this room.

3. Mercenary Corpse

An armored humanoid lays prostrate upon the floor at this T-intersection. Flecks of dried blood are sprinkled on the floor and walls, while a glistening crimson puddle forms a halo around the warrior's head and shoulders. A battleaxe rests upon the ground near the body.

The cloaker, now in area 4, normally rests here before flying up the exit shaft to begin its nightly hunts. The creature surprised Nef'haz's lead mercenary, and the hapless half-orc was engulfed while his companions fled in fear from the aberration's moan. Claw marks gouge the mercenary's forearms and his neck shows signs of the cloaker's deadly bite. A DC 10 Heal check reveals that the half-orc was killed very recently. Since the cloaker flew away after the encounter, no tracks other than those of Nef'haz's mercenaries are present.

Treasure: The dead half-orc wears a suit of masterwork scale mail and carries a battleaxe, throwing axe, and pouch containing 47 gp, and a gilded knucklebone worth 25 gp. A *potion of spider climb* is attached to its belt.

Development: If the party is not taking pains to remain quiet, allow the cloaker to make a Listen check with –4 penalty due to the intervening distance. If the Listen check is successful, the cloaker perches just above the entryway to area 4 and waits to ambush the lead character. If left unmolested, the cloaker does not leave its den until nightfall.

4. Cloaker Den (EL 5)

The narrow, short tunnel opens into an irregularly shaped room perhaps twenty-five feet long and half that wide. Dozens of small stalactites hang from the ceiling, and the cavern walls are comprised of numerous niches and alcoves that make the room's true dimensions difficult to casually discern. Piled against the far wall are a number of items and more than a few skeletons, most of which are covered in dust and grime.

Creatures: The cloaker that killed the half-orc at area 3 hides here. If aware of the party's presence, the creature perches above the narrow tunnel leading into this room, otherwise it is simply lying in the middle of the floor. The cloaker, regardless of its position, does not attack characters unless they enter the room. It was wounded in the brief encounter with Nef'haz's mercenaries and is reluctant to get into any more engagements.

Cloaker: hp 45 (currently 35); *Monster Manual* 36.

Tactics: The cloaker begins combat with its *fear* moan. It then engulfs the nearest character and targets others with its tail slap. The cloaker does not pursue fleeing characters.

Treasure: Amidst the rusted weapons, skeletons, and tattered clothes are a few notable items: three leather purses containing a total of 78 gp, a divine scroll of *blindness/deafness*, an exquisite ruby and silver holy symbol of Dol Arrah (250 gp value), and a potion bandolier containing three *potions of cure light wounds*.

5. The Forgotten Dolgrim (EL 1)

The air emanating from this room stinks of sweat and rotting food. Hundreds of beetles, roaches, and other vermin skitter along the walls and floor.

Creatures: A lone dolgrim warrior resides within this room, too terrified of the cloaker to depart. He has been here for well over two weeks, subsisting on bugs and drinking from the natural cistern at the rear of the chamber. The vermin are harmless.

A dolgrim is a Small goblin-like humanoid with gray skin, four arms, and no head. Its face protrudes directly from the top of its chest and contains two squealing mouths, one on top of the other.

X'XEET **CR 1**

Male dolgrim warrior 1
CE Small aberration
EBERRON Campaign Setting 282
Init +1; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., Spot +1, Listen +1
Languages Undercommon

AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 14
hp 8 (1 HD) DR 5/byeshk or magic
Fort +3, **Ref** +1, **Will** +1

Spd 20 ft.
Melee morningstar +4 (1d6+2) and spear +4 (1d6+1/x3)
Ranged light crossbow +3 (1d6/19–20)
Base Atk +1; **Grp** +3

Abilities Str 15, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 9, Cha 6
SQ dual consciousness
Feats Toughness
Skills Climb +5, Hide +5, Listen +1, Spot +1
Possessions leather armor, light steel shield, morningstar, spear, light crossbow with 25 bolts

Dual Consciousness (Ex) A dolgrim has two brains coordinating its attacks. In addition to providing a +2 bonus on Will saves, the dual brain enables a dolgrim to

make attacks with one off-hand weapon at no penalty.

Additional Arms (Ex) A dolgrim's additional arms grant it a +4 racial bonus on Climb checks and grapple checks.

Tactics: X'xeet is near his breaking point. He fires his light crossbow at the lead character before dropping the weapon to wield his morningstar and spear in melee combat.

Development: X'xeet is familiar with the entire chasm complex. If captured, a successful Intimidate check compels him to reveal all he knows of the chasm's layout. X'xeet is unaware of Nef'haz and Grubbok, as they entered the chasm after X'xeet had already closeted himself within this chamber. If given his freedom, X'xeet makes his way toward the east exit near area **16**. If he encounters Grubbok or other dolgrims while en route, he joins them after informing the dolgaunt chieftain of the party's presence and composition.

Ad Hoc Experience Award: X'xeet may be worth more to the characters alive than dead. If the party manages to successfully interrogate him, award the characters experience as if they had defeated a CR 2 creature.

6. Western Overlook

This 30-foot-high ledge overlooks area **19**. During daylight hours, enough sunlight filters through the chasm throat to provide shadowy illumination. Most likely, characters standing on the overlook can discern the battered hull of Aerdane's airship. The roaring waterfall across the chasm in area **12** imposes a –2 penalty to Listen checks made upon this ledge.

7. Remnants of Battle (EL 3)

The tunnel walls spread outward to form a cavern approximately fifty feet wide and forty feet long. The cavern includes two levels separated by a thirty-foot-high east-west cliff that bisects the center of the room. Bodies, weapons, and other evidence of a recent battle lie scattered about the southern half of the room. A knotted rope extends up the face of the cliff before disappearing over the top edge.

One of Nef'haz's mercenaries anchored the knotted rope to a stalagmite five feet beyond the cliff's edge on the cavern's upper level. With the assistance of the rope it takes a DC 5 Climb check to scale the cliff. Otherwise, a DC 15 Climb check is required.

Creatures: Four dolgrim warriors are huddled just to the right of the northern exit, the only survivors of a dolgrim party that attempted to ambush Nef'haz's band from the rear.

Dolgrim warriors (4): hp 8, 8, 6, 2; see page 23.

Tactics: The dolgrims lost their leader and their nerve during the battle that took place at the base of the cliff. Though they forced Nef'haz's rear guards to flee toward area **9**, the dolgrims are now uncertain how to proceed. Two of them are wounded, one severely. They have little desire to be caught between the characters and Nef'haz's surviving mercenaries. Once aware of the party, the dolgrims fire their crossbows at characters within view until an opportunity exists for them to flee back down the cliff.

Treasure: The bodies at the base of the cliff include four dolgrim warriors and two orc mercenaries. Both orcs wore banded mail and carried scimitars and light wooden shields. Each of the dolgrims carried a morningstar, a spear, and a light crossbow. There is a total of 67 bolts, 9 pp, 78 gp, and 106 sp available. A successful DC 20 Search check reveals a hidden niche containing a diamond (worth 500 gp) within the nondescript belt buckle of one of the dead mercenaries.

Development: Nef'haz posted Vergus Hote at area **9** after his rearguard retreated from this room. If the characters do not quickly and quietly defeat the dolgrims, Vergus overhears the sounds of combat (Listen check DC 2) and reports to his master. In response, Nef'haz orders Vergus to gather three of the half-orc archers positioned on the overlook at area **10**. The band arrives at the top of the cliff to investigate matters twelve rounds after Vergus first overhears combat.

8. Makeshift Morgue

Two bodies are pressed against the northern wall of this cramped cavern. A burning candle rests atop a broken rock column near the center of the room. A necklace hangs from the column beneath the candle. Dangling from the necklace's silver chain are a number of small black stones.

Grovok of the Vol (now dead, see area **11**) intended to cast *animate dead* on his fallen companions once four or more corpses were gathered within this chamber. A successful DC 20 Search check reveals the concealed door within the northern wall. Though not actually a door, the thin wall shows signs of once having been patched with now-cracked mortar. A DC 15 Strength check bursts the wall and opens the natural corridor beyond.

Treasure: Seven black onyx gems (25 gp each), material components for Grovok's *animate dead* spell, hang from the silver necklace (75 gp). The corpses' possessions include two suits of banded mail, a light steel shield, a heavy pick, a short sword, and a heavy crossbow with a quiver holding 14 bolts and 5 masterwork bolts.

9. Sentry Post (EL 3)

The natural corridor opens into a small room before plunging once more into the rock at the far side. A mound of bedrolls, tents, iron pitons, and torches rests against the east wall.

Nef'haz ordered his surviving mercenaries to deposit unnecessary items within this room.

Creatures: Vergus Hote stands guard here to watch the southern approach to area **11**. If unaware of the party's presence, the dwarf is preoccupied (–2 penalty on Spot and Listen checks) with rifling through his companions' discarded possessions in search of anything of value.

Vergus Hote CR 3
Male dwarf expert 4
CN Medium humanoid

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen –1, Spot –1
Languages Common, Dwarven

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14
hp 10 (4 HD)
Fort +0 (+2 vs. poison), **Ref** +3, **Will** +3 (+2 vs. spells)

Spd 20 ft.
Melee light mace +3 (1d6)
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +3

Abilities Str 11, Dex 14, Con 9, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8
SQ dwarf traits, stability
Feats Exotic Weapon Proficiency (ballista), Run
Skills Craft (siege engine) +7, Forgery +7, Knowledge (siege engine) +7, Profession (brewer) +6, Ride +9, Search +7
Possessions chain shirt, light mace, measuring tape (20 feet), 33 gp

Tactics: Vergus is not a brave fellow. He is an engineer, not a warrior, and only accompanied Nef'haz to help fashion the ballistae to shoot down Aerdane's airship. If surprised by the characters, Vergus's first action is to piteously cry for a truce. He offers to escort the party to his leader, Nef'haz. If attacked despite his plea, Vergus flees toward area **11** while screaming at the top of his lungs.

Treasure: The items within the mound of gear are relatively worthless; trustworthiness is not a shared value within Nef'haz's band of mercenaries. The loot contains four bedrolls, an hourglass set within a gnome's skull, four 50-foot coils of hempen rope, five torches, sixteen iron pitons, one of the most poorly written love letters ever to see the light of Eberron's twelve moons, two canvas tents, and a (very simple) lock and its key.

Development: Vergus is aware of the concealed door within area **8** and reveals as much to the party if he feels it will benefit him. The dwarf has not shared this information with Nef'haz.

10. Archer Post (EL 5)

A ledge in the shape of a half-moon overlooks the cavern floor approximately seventy feet below. A massive waterfall spills down the chasm perhaps twenty feet away, its thunderous roar nearly deafening. The ledge is slick with water and slopes slightly outward and downward.

Moving upon the slippery ledge is a precarious venture. A character wishing to run or charge onto the ledge must make a DC 10 Balance check. Listen checks made while on the ledge or within the adjoining tunnel suffer a –4 penalty due to the proximity of the waterfall. During the day, the sun provides shadowy illumination to this area.

Creatures: Four of Nef'haz's elite half-orc archers are positioned here. The mercenaries spotted Aerdane hiding amidst the rubble at the chasm base. Unable to target him due to his total cover, the archers have orders to keep him pinned down and away from his airship.

Elite Archers (4) **CR 2**
Male half-orc fighter 2
LE Medium humanoid (orc)
Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., Listen +1, Spot +3
Languages Common, Orc

AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13
hp 19 (2 HD)
Fort +5, **Ref** +2, **Will** +1

Spd 30 ft.
Melee greataxe +4 (1d12+3/x3)
Ranged composite longbow +4 (1d8+2/x3) or composite longbow +2/+2 (1d8+2/x3)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** +4
Atk Options Precise Shot, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot

Abilities Str 15, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 6
Feats Precise Shot, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot
Skills Spot +3
Possessions studded leather, composite longbow (+2 Str) with 40 arrows, greataxe

Tactics: The half-orcs on the ledge are better archers than melee fighters. They spread out upon the ledge and use their axes as the situation demands. One or more may attempt to overrun characters and make for Nef'haz at area **11**, but only if defeat seems imminent. The waterfall's roar effectively cloaks any sounds of combat occurring upon the ledge. During daylight

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hours, the dolgrims at area **18** shoot indiscriminately at the half-orcs or characters upon this ledge.

Development: If Vergus (see area **9**) previously overheard the party's approach from the south, he reported to Nef'haz before receiving orders to come here. Three of the half-orc archers would have departed with him to investigate the disturbance, leaving one mercenary here to keep an eye on Aerdane.

11. Mercenary Camp (EL 6)

This room thrums with a constant rumble. The northern wall is slick with moisture, as are the numerous tiny stalactites upon the ceiling. A number of shallow puddles dot the floor. An armored warrior sits motionless against the north wall, the dripping water sounding a rhythmic ting against his breastplate. A dozen or more empty vials are scattered across the room.

Listen checks made within this chamber suffer a –4 penalty due to the roar of the waterfall beyond the north wall. The motionless warrior is the dead half-orc cleric Grovok of the Vol. The empty vials held curative potions.

Creatures: This cavern has become Nef'haz's bastion as he attempts to defeat Grubbok and the dolgaunt's dolgrim followers. Nef'haz and his mercenaries, many of whom are wounded, have sallied forth to battle the dolgrims several times before retreating here to heal their injuries. But now the two sides have reached an impasse. The dolgrim have been unable to cross area **12** to reach this location, while Nef'haz has similarly been unable to break the dolgrim resistance holed up in area **13**. Nef'haz is unaware that the dolgrims killed by his *fireball* represented nearly all of Grubbok's force.

Nef'haz

NEF'HAZ **CR 5**

Male half-orc wizard 5

LE Medium humanoid (orc)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +4

Languages Common, Dwarf, Orc, Undercommon

AC 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12

hp 24 (5 HD)

Fort +4, **Ref** +3, **Will** +5

Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk dagger +5 (1d4+2/19–20)

Ranged mwk light crossbow +4 (1d8/19–20)

Base Atk +2; **Grp** +4

Combat gear *potion of gaseous form*, *potion of protection from arrows*, scroll of *dispel magic*

Spells Prepared (CL 5th, +4 melee touch)

2nd—*ghoul touch* (DC 15), *blindness/deafness* (DC 15), *web* (DC 14)

1st—*magic missile*, *shocking grasp*

0—*detect magic*, *detect poison*, *message*, *prestidigitation*

Abilities Str 15, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 12

Feats Brew Potion, Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (necromancy)

Skills Concentration +10, Escape Artist +5, Spellcraft +10, Spot +4

Possessions combat gear, masterwork dagger, masterwork light crossbow, 20 bolts, *bracers of armor +2*, *cloak of resistance +1*, *ring of feather falling*, 49 pp, 20 gp, ornate silver and ruby holy symbol of the Blood of Vol (250 gp value, taken from Grovok's corpse), contract (parchment signed by Nef'haz accepting a mission to recover documents held aboard Aerdane's airship, no identification of employer or nature of documents, includes detailed description of Aerdane's repetitive Stormhome-Fairhaven route)

Spellbook as above plus: 0—all; 1st—*alarm, grease, mage armor, shield, sleep*; 2nd—*bull's strength, mirror image*; 3rd—*fireball, haste*

Ogre: hp 16; *Monster Manual* 199.

Orc Warriors (4): hp 8,8,4,3; *Monster Manual* 203. Replace Alertness with Toughness.

Orc Archers (4): hp 5; *Monster Manual* 203. Replace the javelin with a short bow (+1 ranged, 1d6/×3) and 30 arrows. Replace Alertness with Point Blank Shot.

Tactics: Nef'haz would much rather hire the party than fight them. This is especially true if the characters arrive under the escort of Vergus (see area 9). Nef'haz orders his mercenaries to ready themselves for combat while he attempts to parley. If battle commences, Nef'haz casts *web* before targeting an obvious enemy spellcaster with *blindness*. (Nef'haz already cast his only 3rd-level spell, *fireball*; see area 12.) If events are progressing badly for Nef'haz, he drinks his *potion of gaseous form* (an action he's been considering since the death of Grovok) and floats up the chasm to seek his revenge at a later date. The half-orc may opt to materialize on one of the vacant overlooks to attack the party one last time should they attempt to ascend on Aerdane's airship. Nef'haz' loyalty to his mercenaries does not trump his concerns for his personal welfare.

The ogre simply charges the nearest character once Nef'haz gives the order. The orc warriors establish a line between the characters and Nef'haz, while the orc archers attempt to distance themselves from the characters before firing their bows. All of Nef'haz's mercenaries realize the hopelessness of their situation; they have no line of retreat and are badly shaken from the unexpected battles with the dolgrims. If Nef'haz is slain, the orcs attempt to flee; the ogre fights until killed.

Treasure: The dead cleric Grovok's possessions include a +1 *breastplate*, a masterwork dagger, and a scroll of *lesser restoration*.

Development: If Nef'haz believes the party might agree to assist him, he offers whatever monetary reward he feels is appropriate. He increases this amount to the very edge of believability, but has no intention of honoring any agreement. The moment Nef'haz feels he has the upper hand against the dolgrims, especially if the characters manage to kill the dolgaunt Grubbok, he orders his mercenaries to attack the party. Until such time, Nef'haz and his warriors remain "loyal" to the characters.

Ad-Hoc Experience Award: The EL for this area has been adjusted downward due to the mercenaries' wounds and Nef'haz's depleted spell list. You should still award experience based on the CR of the individual creatures, but you should only give out 75% of the normal total.

12. The Fishery

Three narrow tunnels extend from this large cavern. The stalactite-encrusted roof forms a natural dome, the apex perhaps thirty feet above the rocky floor. A twenty-foot-high cliff rises to a ledge in the middle of the south wall. The northern boundary drops away into the chasm beyond.

The air is heavy with moisture and the floors and walls of the cavern drip water. A gigantic waterfall spills onto the northern overlook, gathers in a small pool, and then plummets once more into the darkness. Its roar is deafening. Three connected, narrow channels are chiseled into the floor and stretch across the room from the pool toward the southern ledge.

Dozens of gruesome corpses are scattered throughout the room. A handful of armored bodies are clustered near the two western exits, while a few smaller humanoid corpses lay near the eastern tunnel. The floor east of the channels is black with soot, and the smell of burning flesh hangs in the air.

This cavern marks the site of the savage battle being fought between Nef'haz's mercenaries and Grubbok's dolgrim warriors. The soot on the floor forms a rough circle that partially extends into the eastern exit; Nef'haz' *fireball* destroyed the bulk of the dolgrim force, though Grubbok's evasion ability saved the dolgaunt chieftain from any harm. A DC 15 Climb check is required to scale the

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southern ledge leading to area 14. The northern ledge is slick with moisture (DC 20 Climb check) and drops 50 feet to the base of the chasm. Listen checks made within this room suffer a –8 penalty due to the roaring waterfall.

Hundreds of small, blind fish throng within the dolgrim-made channels cut into the floor. Each channel is only 5 feet wide and half that deep. The pool, formed within a shallow bowl, is never more than two feet deep.

Treasure: The dead mercenaries' possessions include four suits of banded mail, a suit of masterwork studded leather, three battleaxes, one greataxe, a heavy pick, two short bows, 56 arrows, 134 gp, and an unused *potion of protection from good*. Each of the four dead dolgrims wear leather armor and carry spears, morningstars, and light steel shields.

13. Dolgrim Headquarters (EL 6)

This cavern smells of soot and ash. Several small humanoid corpses, many charred beyond recognition, are stacked like cordwood against the north wall. A dull roar resounds throughout the chamber.

The bodies are eleven dolgrims that were killed by Nef'haz's *fireball* (see area 12). Listen checks made within this room suffer a –4 penalty due to the proximity of the waterfall.

Creatures: The dolgaunt Grubbok and his dolgrim minions established a base within this room. Grubbok sent a runner to the tribe for reinforcements; the dolgaunt is reluctant to attempt another attack until he receives additional support.

A dolgaunt resembles a pale, emaciated hobgoblin with empty eye sockets. Its skin is covered with a layer of writhing cilia, while a mane of longer tendrils surrounds its head. Two long, whiplike tentacles extend from its sholders.

GRUBBOK **CR 6**

Dolgaunt monk 4

LE Medium aberration

EBERRON Campaign Setting 281

Init +3; **Senses** blindsight 360 ft.; Listen +9, Spot +9

Languages Common, Undercommon, Dolgaunt

AC 18, touch 15, flat-footed 15

hp 36 (6 HD) **DR** 5/byeshk or magic

Fort +5, **Ref** +7, **Will** +9 (+11 vs. enchantment); evasion

Spd 40 ft.

Melee 2 tentacles +6 (1d3+2) or unarmed strike +4/+4 (1d8+2)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with tentacles)

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +10

Atk Options Combat Reflexes, Improved Grapple, Improved Trip, *ki* strike (magic), vitality drain

Abilities Str 14, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 11

SQ slow fall 20 ft.

Feats Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Deflect Arrows, Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike, Improved Trip, Snatch Arrows

Skills Balance +9, Climb +8, Hide +8, Jump +7, Listen +9, Move Silently +8, Spot +9, Tumble +7

Vitality Drain (Ex) On a successful grapple check, Grubbok deals 1 point of Constitution damage in addition to normal damage. If injured, Grubbok recovers 2 hit points every time he successfully uses this ability.

Tactics: Unlike his dolgrim lackeys, Grubbok appreciates strategy. The dolgaunt realizes that he is currently overmatched by the mercenaries and may look to the party for assistance. If given the opportunity to parley, Grubbok offers the airship and all its contents to the characters if they assist him against Nef'haz and his mercenaries.

If attacked by the characters, Grubbok grapples and uses his vitality drain on the nearest opponents. If he is aware of the party's concern for Aerdane's welfare, Grubbok retreats toward area **19** using his slow fall ability to leap over the cliff at area **12**, or his fast movement to run down the nearest corridor leading to the chasm base. Grubbok holds Aerdane hostage until reinforcements arrive, threatening to kill the airship captain if the party approaches. See Chapter Two for information on dolgrim reinforcements.

Treasure: The slain dolgrims' possessions include eleven suits of leather armor, eight light crossbows (the remainder are damaged beyond repair), 143 bolts, eleven morning stars and an identical number of spears and light steel shields. The armor and weapons are sized for Small creatures.

Development: If Nef'haz learns of Grubbok's defeat, the half-orc immediately orders an attack on the party. Similarly, Grubbok turns on the party the moment it feels the mercenary company has been seriously weakened. The dolgaunt has no intention of honoring any earlier offers made to the characters.

14. Rogue's Hideout (EL 3)

Motes of dust swirl within the air of this room, and the chalky layer that once covered the floor has recently been disturbed. Blackened footprints meander about the chamber.

Creatures: Nux, one of Nef'haz's more powerful henchmen, clambered up the cliff from area **12** after failing to avoid the *fireball* his master cast at the dolgrims. After drinking a *potion of cure moderate wounds*, Nux took his time finding a decent hiding place (DC 17 Spot check) behind the lone rock column within this room. He now contemplates whether to rejoin the fray, flee, or take revenge on Nef'haz for the errant *fireball*.

Nux Two-thuds **CR 3**

Male half-orc rogue 3
CE Medium humanoid (orc)
Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +7, Spot +7
Languages Common, Orc

AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15
hp 16 (3 HD)
Fort +2, **Ref** +5, **Will** +2; evasion

Spd 30 ft.
Melee mwk heavy mace +6 or mwk heavy mace +4 (1d8+3) and mwk light mace +4 (1d6+1)
Ranged composite shortbow +4 (1d6/x3)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** +5
Atk Options Two-Weapon Fighting, sneak attack +2d6

Abilities Str 16, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 6
SQ trap sense +1, trapfinding
Feats Improved Initiative, Two-Weapon Fighting
Skills Climb +7, Hide +6, Jump +11, Listen +7, Move Silently +6, Spot +7, Tumble +10
Possessions +1 *chain shirt*, masterwork heavy mace, masterwork light mace, composite shortbow with 28 arrows

Tactics: Nux has no qualms about killing adventurers. The half-orc attempts to sneak attack the first character to step within striking distance of his two maces. Nux works his way toward the 20-foot-high cliff overlooking area **12** and, if the cavern below appears reasonably clear of dolgrims, leaps off the edge (DC 15 Jump check to take only 10 feet of falling damage). Nux rejoins his fellows if they yet live, otherwise he departs the chasm via the south entrance.

15. Fish Drying Room

A thin wooden beam, supported at either

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end by stick tripods, runs the length of this cavern. Slender slabs of meat, none more than a foot in length, dangle from hooks along the central beam. Crude crates, apparently empty, rest against both the east and west walls. Several rusted knives are scattered around a pile of entrails and scales in the center of the room. The entire cavern stinks of fish.

This is where the dolgrims gut and air-dry fish culled from the channels at area **12**. The hanging slabs of meat are trout that have been scaled, headed, and cleaned. The crates within this room are actually backpacks; two leather straps are attached to the wicker lattice of each crate. At the end of the day, dolgrim warriors load dried trout into the crates and carry them to the tribal caverns to the east where the fish are smoked and stored.

16. Dying Dolgrim

Three small, strange humanoid creatures lay on the floor of this small cavern. Each of the creatures has four arms and two mouths. Grievous wounds cover their grayish flesh, and dozens of flies buzz about the chamber. The sickly aroma of death hangs heavily in the air.

Two of the dolgrims are already dead; the third is about to join his fellows. All were mortally wounded early in the fighting with Nef'haz's mercenaries. Their possessions lay on the floor of area **12**.

Dolgrim: hp –8 (stable); see page 39.

17. Bear's Den (EL 4)

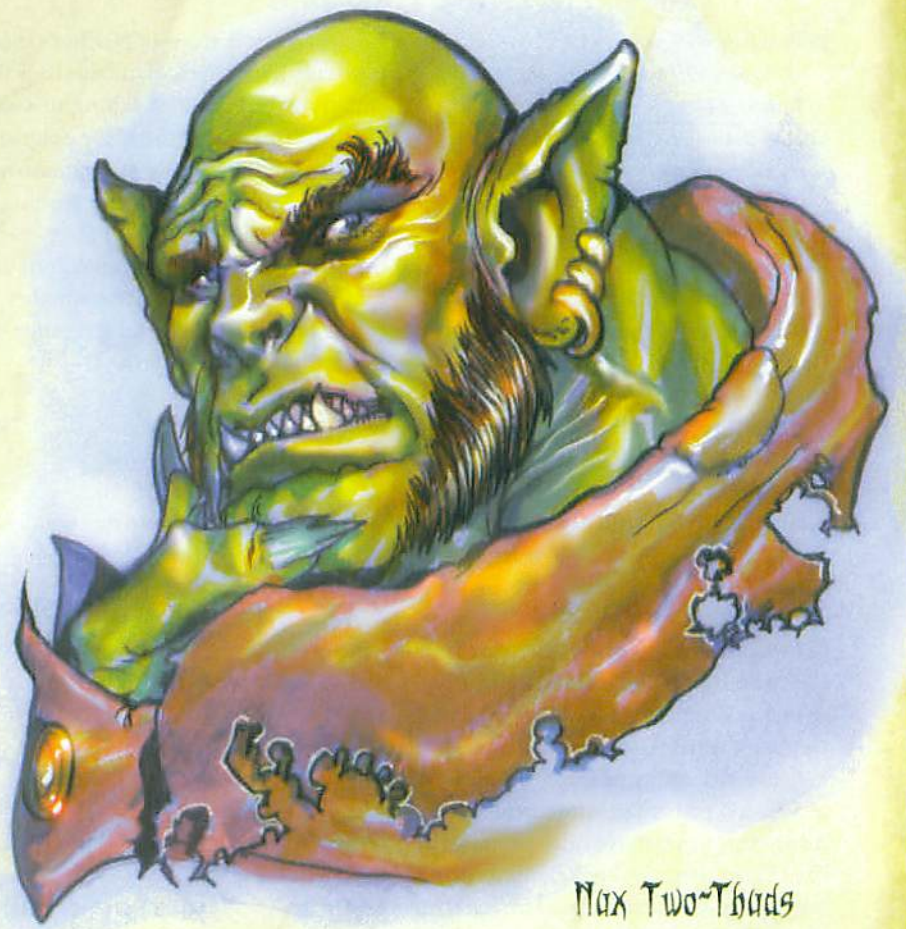
This small, circular cavern smells of wet fur and old food. Piles of half-eaten fish, bones, and gray meat cover the floor.

The concealed door (Search check DC 10) in the northern wall is actually a narrow crevice that opens into the upwardly sloping northern tunnel once one squeezes through the gap.

Creatures: A massive brown bear lairs within this room. The animal is accustomed to the presence of the dolgrims, and generally ignores the humanoids so long as they deposit food when entering the den or pass through the narrow crevice to the north.

Brown Bear: hp 51; treat as a polar bear, *Monster Manual* 269.

Tactics: This well-fed bear is content to ignore characters that remain outside its den. If a character enters the room or otherwise antagonizes the animal, it attacks.



Nax Two-Thads

18. Crossbow Perch (EL 3)

A wide, half-circle ledge extends outward from the mountain wall to overlook the base of the chasm more than one hundred feet below.

The chasm floor is 130 feet below the lip of this overlook. During the day, characters on the overlook can be targeted by the orc archers at area **10**. A successful Spot check opposed by Aerdane's Hide check discerns the captain partially hidden amongst the rubble in the northwest corner of area **19**.

Creatures: Four dolgrim warriors are bunched within the tunnel threshold leading out onto the overlook. Two dead dolgrims lay at their feet, each body pierced by several orc-fired arrows.

Dolgrims (4): hp 8; see page 39.

Tactics: The dolgrims fight savagely, realizing they have no route of escape. Fearful of the orc archers, the humanoids attempt to remain within the narrow tunnel during combat.

Treasure: In addition to their normal gear, one of the dead dolgrim warriors wears a pair of armbands that are actually a set of *bracers of armor +1*.

19. Chasm Floor (EL Varies)

This huge cavern marks the base of a massive canyon. A towering waterfall spills down the south face of the chasm, impacting a ledge before plummeting into a churning pool of untold depth. Mounds

of broken rock and rubble form a labyrinthine mess in the northwest corner. Several ledges overlook the chasm floor from various heights on the canyon walls.

A heavily-battered wooden airship rests within the center of the cavern. Listing badly to one side, the hull shows significant signs of damage. The ship consists of three platforms joined by narrow catwalks. A ballista is secured to the forward, roughly circular platform. Amidships stands the ship's wooden helm, and the aft platform sports a badly damaged cabin. The cabin's roof and one of its walls are missing, likely from the same attacks that forced the ship down.

This is where Aerdane crash-landed the *Cloud Ant*. Listen checks made within this room suffer a –8 penalty due to the roaring waterfall. The pool to the southwest is 40 feet deep at its deepest point. During the day, the chasm is shrouded in shadowy illumination; otherwise it is as dark as the adjoining tunnels.

Creatures: Captain Aerdane d'Lyrandar crouches within the rubble in the northwest portion of this cavern (Hide +3). The half-elf's location is denoted by an "A" on the Clawmark Mines Map.

Captain Aerdane d'Lyrandar **CR 5**
Male half-elf aristocrat 1/sorcerer 5
LG Medium humanoid (elf)
Init +1; **Senses** low-light vision; Spot +2, Listen +2
Languages Common, Elven, Auran

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14
hp 32 (6 HD)
Immune sleep
Fort +5, **Ref** +4, **Will** +7 (+9 vs. enchantment)

Spd 30 ft.
Melee dagger +1 (1d4–1/19–20)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** +1
Combat gear *potion of cure moderate wounds*
Spells Known (CL 5th, +3 ranged touch)
2nd (6/day; 2 remaining)—*mirror image, scorching ray*
1st (7/day; 4 remaining)—*alarm, animate rope, endure elements, feather fall, mage armor**
0 (5/day)—*acid splash, detect magic, flare, light, message, read magic*
Spell-Like abilities (CL 6)
1/day—*gust of wind, wind's favor**
*Already cast.

Abilities Str 8, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 16
Feats Eschew Materials, Least Mark of Storm, Lesser Mark of Storm
Skills Appraise +3, Concentration +11, Craft (woodworking) +2, Diplomacy +12, Hide +3, Profession (sailor) +5, Profession (carpenter) +3, Spellcraft +3
Possessions combat gear, *cloak of resistance +2*

Development: Aerdane considers anyone not of orc or dolgrim stock as a potential ally. The moment he perceives characters on the chasm floor, he waves his arms to reveal his location. Aerdane does not exit the rubble unless the threats posed by the orc archers (area **10**) and dolgrim crossbowmen (area **18**) have been removed.

If given the opportunity, Aerdane beseeches the party for assistance.

The half-elf in Lyrandar livery looks so relieved he might collapse at any moment. His clothes are tattered, burned, and torn, but he shows no visible wounds. "Bless Esravash!" he exclaims, a bit too loudly. "Did the matriarch send you to rescue me? No matter! We must hurry. I can get the *Ant* airborne if given but a few minutes to work. The supplies I need are located within the cabin."

Aerdane requires fifteen minutes of relatively uninterrupted time to repair the most significant breaches within the ship's hull. For each character devoted to assisting Aerdane, the time is lessened by one minute. An assisting character that makes a DC 10 Profession (carpentry), Craft (woodwork), or similar skill check further reduces this time by a minute. At the end of this duration, the *Cloud Ant* is airworthy and Aerdane urges the party to quickly board so that he can guide it upward through the chasm throat.

Aerdane is bound and determined to salvage the entire airship, and dismisses any potential alternate plan that does not involve getting the entire ship out of the cavern. If the airship is somehow totally destroyed in the fighting, he reluctantly agrees to salvage the most important cargo and return with the PCs to Dig's End through the tunnels.

Tactics: Nef'haz and his mercenaries, if still alive, won't wait idly during this time. While they do not enter the chasm base, they position themselves along the overlooks at areas **6** and **10**. The mercenaries harass visible characters with ranged attacks. See Chapter Two for detailed information concerning Nef'haz's tactics in the event of the *Cloud Ant's* ascent.

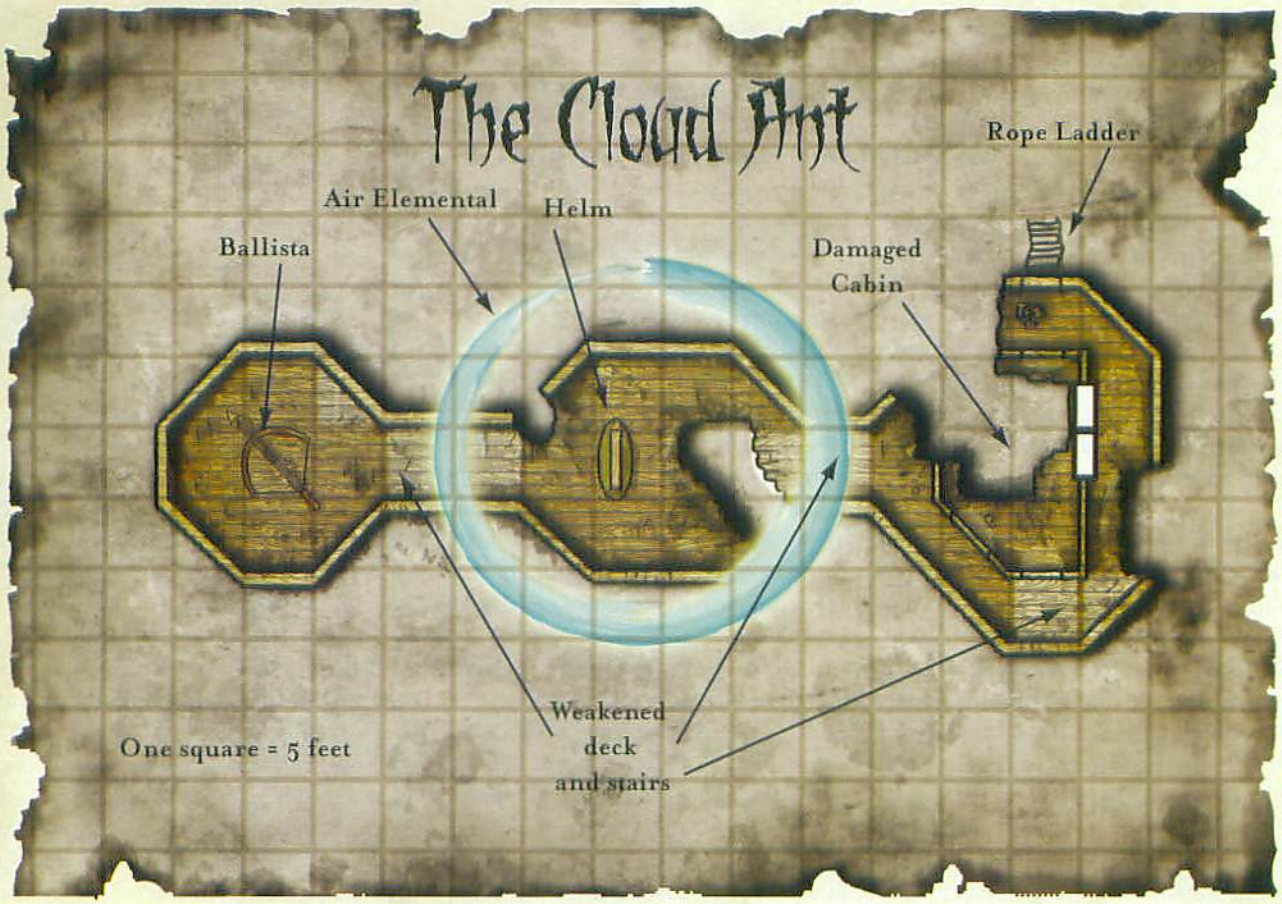
If Grubbok lives, he quickly moves to area **16** and begins to organize an attack on the grounded ship. A dolgrim warrior arrives via the eastern exit with each passing minute. Dolgrim reinforcements rush down the nearest tunnel toward area **19** in groups of three. This continues until the ship becomes airborne. See Chapter Two for detailed information concerning Grubbok's tactics in the event the *Cloud Ant* lifts from the ground.

Treasure: A heavy wooden trunk within the damaged cabin of the Cloud Ant contains a smaller box filled with documents. This is the object of the party's mission. See "Concluding the Adventure" for information pertaining to these sensitive papers. Also within the unlocked trunk are seven *potions of cure light wounds*, two *potions of cure moderate wounds*, a *potion of feather fall*, and three *potions of darkvision*. Scattered about the floor of the hold are hammers, nails, thin strips or wood, and other woodworking implements.

Wheel of Wind and Water

This ornately carved wooden wheel resembles the helm of a mundane sailing ship. When mounted on an airship, it allows a character with the *wind's favor* ability of the lesser Mark of Storm to telepathically control the bound air elemental. See page 263 of the *Eberron Campaign Setting* for more information.

Strong conjuration; CL 12th; Craft Wonderous Item, *control winds, planar binding*, creator must have the Mark of Storm; Price 8,000 gp; Weight 30 lbs.



***Ad Hoc* Experience:** Give the party a CR 4 experience award if Aerdane is able to repair the ship without being killed.

Chapter Two: Up, Up, and Away!

Named for its insectlike appearance, the *Cloud Ant* was one of the finest transport galleys within the Lyrandar fleet prior to Nef'haz's acidic fire barrage. Constructed almost entirely of soarwood and over one hundred feet from bow to stern, the airship consists of three octagonal platforms connected by a pair of narrow catwalks. The forward platform supports a ballista that may be pivoted in all directions. Amidships is the location of Aerdane's prized possession, a *wheel of wind and water.*

The soarwood planking that comprises the *Cloud Ant's* deck is pitted and scored from drops of acidic fire. If a single square is subjected to more than 400 pounds, the wood collapses. Some squares have suffered even greater damage; only 100 pounds of pressure causes them to collapse. A successful DC 10 Knowledge (architecture) or DC 20 Spot check discerns identifies weakened deck squares. If either of the squares supporting Aerdane's *wheel of wind and water* collapse, the magical helm drops to the ground. Aerdane must thereafter make opposed Charisma checks to command the bound elemental (see The Ascent, below).

A creature standing on a deck section when it collapses must make a DC 15 Reflex save or fall. A subsequent DC 20 Reflex save allows a falling creature to grab an adjacent edge (if any) before plummeting downward. If either the forward or rear section of the ship is wholly severed from the central portion surrounded by the elemental bubble, it falls. A creature adjacent to the amidships bubble may make a DC 20 Reflex saving throw to move onto a stable section, as indicated above.

The one-room, one-story cabin located at the rear of Aerdane's ship suffered extensive damage. Much of the forward and starboard walls and ceiling have burned away. A lone door set in the aft face allows access. A number of portholes, each 1 foot wide, pierce the soarwood planking every five feet along the cabin's perimeter. Each circular window has a thin shutter of wood that may be closed from within the cabin's interior. The roof is ten feet above the main deck. A 60-foot rope ladder, currently coiled upon the deck, is attached by two iron shafts starboard of the cabin proper.

The *Cloud Ant's* only remaining ballista is attached to a circular pivot upon the vessel's bow. The pivot allows the ballista to fire in any direction from a horizontal plane upward; it cannot fire at targets lower than itself. Nine bolts fitted for the weapon lay scattered about the pivot wheel, with a tenth bolt currently loaded. The rest

of the ammunition was lost as the ship plummeted into the canyon.

Aerdane's ship is powered by a bound air elemental named Azflyr. Azflyr's shape is that of a ring encircling the wheel amidships. The elemental rotates on a twisting axis at an incredible rate when powering the ship, making it look like a giant, nearly transparent bubble. Treat the elemental's presence as a strong wind. Ranged attacks passing through the bubble in either direction suffer a –2 penalty on attack rolls, as do Listen checks made to overhear sounds on the opposite side of the bubble from the creature making the check.

Azflyr is none too happy about recent events. Without Aerdane's *wheel of wind and water*, the elemental would surely attempt to sever its bonds. Aerdane understands the only guaranteed way he can command the elemental to propel the ship upward is to stand amidships at the magical helm. (A dragonmarked character with the *wind's favor* ability of the Lesser Mark of Storm could also command the elemental in this manner.)

Regular deck square: 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 20; Break DC 18.

Weakened deck square: 2 in. thick; Hardness 5; hp 10; Break DC 15.

Ballista: Huge heavy crossbow (3d8/19–20); 120-foot range increment; creatures smaller than Large require two full-round actions to reload. Medium creatures take a –4 penalty on attack rolls, and Small creatures take a –6 penalty on attack rolls. If Vergus Hote (see area **9**) has somehow been forced to man the ballista, the dwarf's proficiency ensures he does not suffer any penalties for firing the siege weapon.

The Ascent

The only egress path available is a nearly vertical ascent without the ship changing its current orientation. The airship can rise no faster than 10 feet per round. The narrowing and twisting chasm throat makes a quicker ascent impossible and moving upward at a greater rate causes the airship's hull to warp, splinter, and begin to fall apart. Remember that the Lyrandar vessel is now held together by a handful of nails and some twine. Terrifying groans from the wood echo throughout the chasm during the ascent, as if to accentuate this point.

So long as Aerdane (or a dragonmarked character with the *wind's favor* ability of the Lesser Mark of Storm) stands at the helm, the elemental obeys commands without fail. Aerdane pilots the ship slowly upward, using a standard action each round to do so, unless a character asks him to do otherwise. Aerdane will not lower the ship to collect fallen characters unless successfully Intimidated, or made helpful with a Diplomacy check (his initial attitude is indifferent).

If no one is alive to successfully use the *wheel of wind or water*, or if the helm has fallen from the airship, an opposed Charisma check is required to command the elemental to continue its ascent. Making Charisma checks in this manner is a standard action. Azflyr has a Charisma modifier of +0. On a failed check, you should randomly determine the elemental's action; it may continue the climb, hover, or begin a 10-foot-per-round descent. Make this check each round until the elemental is once again successfully commanded.

Because of the restrictions surrounding the climb, the only two landing pads for would-be boarders are at areas **12** and **18**; the overlooks at areas **6** and **10** are too far away to allow any hope of a successful landing (though feel free to have a few berserk dolgrims make the attempt.) When the airship reaches an altitude of 50 feet, any dolgrims in area **12** attempt to leap on board (DC 10 Jump check). It takes a DC 20 jump check for them to make the leap from area **18** once the airship reaches an altitude of 130 feet.

Missile fire, of course, is a different matter. Enemies can fire upon shipboard characters so long as the airship is at or below their current elevation. When the airship is exactly ten feet higher than an enemy's elevation, shipboard characters receive cover from that enemy's ranged attacks. When the airship is greater than ten feet above an enemy's elevation, ranged attacks can only target shipboard characters standing on the nearest edge of the rising ship. Characters atop the cabin roof effectively add 10 feet to their elevation for purposes of missile fire modifiers.

Tactics: Enemies' tactics depend heavily on the number of creatures that have survived earlier encounters with the party. Generally, Nef'haz and his mercenaries target characters aboard the airship with spells and ranged attacks from the overlooks at areas **6** and **10**. Nef'haz prefers to target obvious spellcasters with *blindness* and *magic missile*.

Surviving dolgrims enter area **12** in preparation for a boarding attempt. If more than six dolgrims survive, additional members of Grubbok's band position themselves along the overlook at area **18** to harass the characters with missile fire before they, too, make a flying leap. Dolgrims that successfully board the ship from area **12** might throw the 60-foot rope ladder overboard to allow their fellows at area **19** to begin to climb toward the airship. Dolgrims that do not reach area **12** in time for a boarding attempt make a desperate dash to area **18**.

Grubbok, if alive, positions himself on the overlook at area **18**. He remains out of sight until the airship is level with his overlook, at which point he leaps aboard the ship and uses his vitality drain ability and flurry of blows against whoever seems to be commanding the airship. If Grubbok realizes he is doomed, he attempts to grapple the nearest enemy before leaping overboard.

While Nef'haz's mercenaries and Grubbok's dolgrims continue to battle one another within the same local area, both groups recognize the rising airship as the primary target. Nef'haz does not attempt to dislodge dolgrims from areas **12** and **18**, nor does Grubbok send his minions against mercenaries at areas **6** and **10**. Should the airship climb above the highest overlook at area **18**, however, the battle between mercenaries and

dolgrims reconvenes as any surviving mercenaries attempt a hasty retreat.

Development: Once the airship exits the 300-foot-deep chasm, Aerdane, if alive, gently coaxes the ship down the slope and lands within the market square of Dig's End. If the airship is not commanded, Azflyr randomly chooses an altitude and direction and continues slowly propelling the ship at a speed of 5 miles per hour. House Lyrandar agents eventually overtake the vessel.

Ad Hoc Experience: Dealing with a dangerously damaged ship during a precarious climb is worthy of an additional reward. If the party successfully remains aboard until the airship exits the chasm mouth, reward the characters as if they defeated a CR 6 creature.

Concluding the Adventure

If the PCs take longer than 4 hours to reach Aerdane and repair the airship, Grubbok manages to drive Nef'haz and his mercenaries from the cave. When that happens, the dolgaunt proceeds to kill and devour the hapless half-elf, and then strips the airship of anything remotely useful, returning with his spoils to the dolgrim tribe's lair in Khyber. As House Lyrandar is desperate to retrieve their missing documents, an expedition into the depths might be in order.

If Aerdane survives and the *Cloud Ant* lands safely within Dig's End, the half-elf is effusive with his thanks and praise for the party. Aerdane is highly thought of within House Lyrandar, even in light of his crash, and his support goes a long way to ensuring the characters' good reputation within the house. Aerdane encourages the party to remain until Lyrandar agents arrive so that he may sing of their praises and ensure they are paid for their efforts.

Juffrey's attitude and response in light of a successful mission depends upon his relationship with the characters and whether Aerdane survived. Juffrey, of course, wants nothing more than to see the characters depart before House Lyrandar agents arrive. The wizard pays them immediately and urges them to depart Dig's End. Juffrey tells Aerdane he hired the party to help, as he believed his own talents would not equal the task.

The exact nature of the documents within the *Cloud Ant's* hold is left for you to decide. If the characters do not review the documents (and both Juffrey and Aerdane would request they do not), the party may not realize the full ramifications of their mission until later in the campaign.

Ryan is the designer of the doubly ENnie-nominated Valus *campaign setting and the author of the adventure* "The Return of Ippizicus Child-Eater."

Scaling the Adventure

"Tensions Rising" is designed for a group of four 4th-level characters, but with a little work it can be adapted for use by 2nd–3rd-level characters or 5th–6th-level characters. Simply adjust the NPCs' character levels (except for Juffrey and Aerdane) by one for each level your party's average deviates from 4. Many of the combatants within this adventure are wounded when encountered; for higher-level parties, have the creatures be fully healed. Adjust the dolgrim rate of reinforcements appropriately: for higher-level parties, consider allowing two dolgrims to arrive per minute; for lower-level parties, have one dolgrim arrive every two minutes. Be cautious of higher-level play in particular; groups with access to *fly* spells can greatly change the scope of this adventure. Don't forget to adjust treasure levels accordingly. Specific changes to the adventure include:

2nd–3rd-level parties: Change the cloaker to a choker at area **4**. Remove two of the orc archers at area **10**. Change the brown bear at area **17** to a black bear.

5th–6th-level parties: Add an additional wounded cloaker at area **4**. Add 8 orc zombies to area **8**. Have **Grovok** (CE male orc cleric 5) still be alive. Return a *fireball* to Nef'haz's spell list; assume the *fireball* he used against the dolgrims at area **12** came from a scroll.

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THE COMING STORM

BY GREG A. VAUGHAN,
BY UDON with Mike Franchina,
BY ROBERT LAZZARETTI,
GREYHAWK, MID-LEVEL (6TH–12TH), DUNGEON CRAWL,

Hundreds of years ago, a sect of peaceful monks from a distant land dwelt in a remote monastery. The arrival of savage raiders put an end to their peaceful lives, but the spirits of the temple did not sit idly by while the raiders slaughtered their servants. They visited a potent curse upon the insurgents, and now the bandits are the new, unwilling caretakers of a temple that loathes them, allowed into the Material Plane only during the height of a powerful storm.

"The Coming Storm" is a D&D adventure for four 10th-level characters. Although this adventure takes place in the WORLD OF GREYHAWK, it can fit into any mountainous area on the edge of civilization in your campaign world. In the FORGOTTEN REALMS, this could be the Galena mountains near Damara. In the EBERRON campaign setting, it could be the Graywall Mountains.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

The Yatil Mountains have long been shrouded in mystery and menace. The nearby citizens of Perrenland live ill at ease in the shadows of those peaks.

Many are the terrors that have been visited upon these folk—not the least of which was the arrival of the Relentless Horde on their northern borders 274 years ago. For 25 years the magnificent Ogobanuk, kha-khan of the Relentless Horde, spread his conquest across the whole of the northern realms, all the way to the Griff Mountains. One of Ogobanuk's bloodiest war leaders, the Ataman Histchok, led his riders in bold forays across the hinterlands as far south as the Yatil Mountains. There he stumbled upon the hidden Temple of Celestial Winds, sanctuary of the mysterious Shensite monks.

These enigmatic holy men were sojourners from a distant and ancient land called Mur, a mysterious realm that lies hundreds of miles northwest across the Dramidj Ocean. The peaceful Shensites, worshipers of powerful divine spirits called "obahs," were quickly overwhelmed by the bloodthirsty riders.

As Histchok's men tortured the Grand Mystic of the Shensites, the dying man uttered a curse that made the conquest of the riders their prison. The wrath of the obahs not only twisted and deformed Histchok and his men, but also separated the temple from the land and time itself. The raiders became prisoners in the very sanctuary they had desecrated. In order to remind them of what they lost, the obahs granted the ataman and his men the chance to leave the temple and taste the freedom of the real world whenever the storms came down from the mountains onto the lowlands. For the duration of those thunderstorms, the ataman's men were free to ride out and pillage at

will, but always when the storm ended they were forced back into the temple that had become their prison.

When the witch queen Iggwilv conquered Perrenland 114 years ago, her attention was drawn to the Temple of Celestial Winds when she learned of Ataman Histchock's raids. She approached him with an offer to join her forces, but the arrogant and overconfident warrior rebuffed the witch queen's offer. In anger, Iggwilv warped the dimensional curse already on the temple and barred it from returning to the Material Plane even when the storms did come. The Storm Riders were finally confined for good.

Over time, the Perrenlanders forgot about the Storm Riders. Unfortunately, as time passed, Iggwilv's wardings were never renewed. They began unraveling, and only a month ago, the Celestial Temple once again broke through space and time, appearing as the thunderheads gathered on the peaks.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

Word of attacks by mysterious raiders who strike only when powerful storms roll down off of the Yatils reaches the PCs' ears. The PCs track the raiders to a mountain valley where they witness the manifestation of an exotic temple as a storm rolls in over the rugged peaks. They battle a band of riders emerging from the temple and then enter to discover the remnants of an ancient culture from a far-away land.

Eventually, the party locates the captives siezed by the raiders. As the prisoners are released, the storm passes and the party finds itself trapped in a temple that is no longer connected to the Material Plane. The party must face these cursed and twisted raiders and their horrific commander in order to break the curse and escape back to the real world.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

Perrenland is a large realm with a vast frontier, ripe for exploration and adventure. The PCs' purpose for being in Perrenland when this adventure begins is unimportant. Either of the following hooks can serve to draw their attention to rumors of a strange temple that manifests in the mountains during storms.

- The party comes upon a wagon train in the foothills that was attacked and destroyed during a recent thunderstorm. A lone, dying survivor tells them that the Storm Riders are responsible, and that they abducted several children. The riders' trail leads into the mountains. If needed, the leaders of the caravan could approach the PCs with an offer of 5,000 gp if they can rescue the abducted children.
- A rich and somewhat eccentric scholar named Kadimus approaches one of the PCs with an offer. He's heard of their exploits, and wants to hire them to seek out a remote temple in the mountains near Perrenland. Kadimus believes this temple was constructed by monks from the distant land of Mur, a place rumored to have 3,000 gods. If the PCs can provide him with a complete map to (and of) this temple, he promises them each a payment of 2,000 gp. He tells them that any loot they find is theirs to keep, although he hopes they come to him with anything they find that they want to sell. Finally, if the temple really was built by monks from Mur, the place is likely to have information on their 3,000 gods. For each of these gods the PCs can identify, name, and bring back representations of (even if such representations are merely sketches of statues), he promises a further reward of 500 gp.

THE CURSED TEMPLE

Any large library or well-versed sage can determine the likely location of the Temple of Celestial Winds, as can a DC 30 Knowledge (geography) check. Feel free to place this temple in any out-of-the-way mountainous location in your campaign world. If you're using the WORLD OF GREYHAWK map from DUNGEON #118, the Temple of Celestial Winds is about ninety miles northwest of the Forgotten Temple of Tharizdun, in hex S4–104.

If the PCs are tracking the Storm Riders from the site of a recent attack (likely occurring in the foothills to the east of Krestible), it's about a 100-mile journey through ever-increasing mountainous terrain. Assuming the trail's no more than a day old (and it's rained for no more than 12 hours), it's a DC 30 Survival check to track the raiders and their prisoners through the mountains. The trail ascends into the foothills of the Yatils and ultimately onto the lower slopes of the mountains themselves. The treacherous journey covers at least 60 miles of mountain terrain along an overgrown trail. Feel free to liven up the journey with wandering monsters as you see fit, using the list of creatures for temperate mountains on page 97 of the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*.

THE LAND OF MUR AND THE SHENSITE ORDER

The Order of the Shensites originated in the distant and little-known land of Mur, far to the west on the coast of the Gulf of Ghayar. The land of Mur abuts the waters of the gulf and rises into a tall chain of steep mountains. It is a realm of contrasts with the warm currents of the Dramidj Ocean combining with the bitterly cold prevailing winds from Telchuria to create a zone of moist, tumultuous weather. This warm updraft of moist air and the resulting thunderous downpours from the cold upper air creates a mountainous jungle region of verdant rain forest perched atop steep crags and laced with spectacular waterfalls of prodigious height. From this topography, the land of Mur is known to some scholars as the Verdured Heights.

In the past, the nation of Zeif conducted limited trade with the relatively isolationist people of Mur, but strife with Dramidj pirates and prodigious sea serpents made the trade routes unreliable. The government of Mur remains mysterious to outlanders, but is believed to involve a divine monarch who dwells in a hanging palace built upon the green-draped cliffs. The lowlands near the coast are slightly drier and support a few more traditional port settlements through which outside trade is conducted.

The inhabitants of Mur are not from any of the human sub-races known in the Flanaess. Their origins remain a mystery to the people of the East. One peculiarity of Mur is

a strange propensity within the population that sometimes results in children being born with multiple usable arms. This is not seen as a disfigurement or anomaly by the people. Rather, it is considered a blessing from the obahs, the watchful spirits of the lands around them. This trait carries into the monster species of Mur with even more regularity. Some sages speculate that these changes arise from a hidden magical source that effects all the residents of Mur. Giral-lons and displacer beasts abound in Mur, and it is possible that such species actually originated there.

The Shensites were an order of pacifist monks that sought to explore their existence in Mur by separating themselves from the corrupting effects of society. Like most people of Mur, the Shensites did not worship deities in the traditional sense. Rather, they revered the 3,000 obahs—guardian spirits who influence even the smallest aspects of daily life. The Shensites took their name from their chosen obah: Shensi the Serpent. This figure represents the mind at peace, which allows for the greatest introspective thought.

The land of Mur is traditionally plagued by its warlike Komali neighbors. The Komalis are why the majority of Mur's population dwells in defensible villages and cities built into the sides of mountains. When one particularly devout temple of Shensites determined that they would be better served in their peaceful contemplation by leaving the Komali threat far behind, they traveled across the sea to the Yatils and established a new temple in this strange new land.

It is the bitterest irony that this sect was indirectly destroyed by the Komali. When the Sultan of Zeif hired the nomadic Brazen Horde of southern Komal to serve as a buffer against the Paynims, the Paynim horse warriors were in turn displaced. The Paynim tribes created the Relentless Horde and thundered into the northern Flanaess, bringing destruction and death. The war leader of one minor tribe stumbled upon this secluded Shensite temple and slaughtered the monks. Perhaps the Grand Mystic was aware of this irony when he bitterly called down a dying curse upon the leader of the warband. In any event, the single religious Mur outpost on the Flanaess has long since fallen into ruin.

RIDERS ON THE STORM (EL 13)

The raiders' trail quickly vanishes as it enters the valley of Celestial Winds, as the valley floor consists of a raging river of runoff from the storms that lash the mountain peaks. The valley walls are fairly rugged and steep, with no obvious exits and no sign of where the riders may have retreated. As the PCs arrive in the region, a new storm breaks. Thunder and lightning rumble in the dark skies above and a torrential rain pelts the region. As the storm strikes, the Temple of Celestial Winds is pulled into the Material Plane.

At the southern end of the valley, where once was only the stark, rain-washed wall of the rising mountain, the air and rain now dance with some sort of shimmering distortion. A massive edifice appears from thin air, perching at the end of the vale as if it had always been there. A colonnaded temple of some strange architecture seemingly hanging from the cliff face, the building rises upon itself in ever higher prominences. Atop the temple's roof and looming over what seems to be the primary entrance is a great serpentine stone dragon of an unfamiliar species. It is a massive beast with wings spread and mouth agape as it stares down the valley. From the mouth of this wyrm falls a steady torrent of water as the runoff from the mountain is collected on the temple roof and redirected through sluices to the stone dragon's maw. This torrent falls past the temple's steps and adds to the rushing flow on the valley's floor.

Allow the PCs a moment to react to the sudden appearance of this strange building. As soon as they make a move toward it or otherwise react, the great front doors swing open. From within emerge the Storm Riders, the obah-scorned raiders cursed to live within the temple save for during the height of the storm. Each of these riders wears exotic scale mail with demonic helms, and are armed with cruel-looking scimitars, lances, and bows. Their horses wear *horseshoes of a zephyr*, and can thunder along the surface of the river with ease. The skins of both horses and riders look horribly burned.

The runoff from the deluge forms a raging river down the center of the valley. The river is only ten feet deep, but you should treat its waters as stormy for purposes of Swim checks. Creatures in the valley are not in danger of being struck by lightning, but the torrential downpour reduces visibility ranges by half, resulting in a –4 penalty on Spot and Search checks. The rain automatically extinguishes small flames, and both Listen checks and ranged weapon attacks suffer a –4 penalty. The steep sides of the valley are not vertical cliffs, but they are slippery with rain—it's a DC 5 Climb check to move around on these slopes.

Creatures: The group of raiders consists of one scorned barbarian leading a group of eight scorned fighters, each mounted on a scorned horse. While these raiders are not from Mur, the armor and weapons they've adopted in the centuries of their imprisonment in the Temple of Celestial Winds make them look quite exotic and distinctive.

The raiders ride north from the temple on scorned warhorses, moving at a speed of 40 ft. They can take the run action for much of this length, charging along the river just above its surface. The PCs thus have five rounds to prepare. If the PCs hide among the rock and scree to either side of the river, the raiders are unlikely to notice them as they ride past since their Spot and Listen checks aren't that high. The leader has the best chance to hear them with his +12 Listen check, but distance and the rain can easily negate this bonus. The raiders aren't expecting trouble, so you can assume they're taking 10 on Spot and Listen checks.

Scorned Fighters (8): hp 47 each; see Appendix.

Variag, Scorned Barbarian: hp 85; see Appendix.

Scorned Horses (9): hp 34; see Appendix.

Tactics: If the raiders notice the PCs, five charge with their lances before wheeling to attack with their scimitars, taking full advantage of Ride-By Attack. Their mounts aid in the fight as well. The

remaining raiders and the barbarian rein in 60 feet away and attack with arrows. If forced into melee, the barbarian rages and dismounts to finish off the fight.

KEY TO THE TEMPLE OF CELESTIAL WINDS

When the Grand Mystic invoked his curse upon Ataman Histchok and his raiders, the temple was separated from space and time. As long as the skies are clear, the temple is a prison cell with no exits. It does, however, occasionally touch on other planes and dimensions, allowing strange creatures and magical effects to find their way in and become trapped when the temple drifts again. The timeless state within the temple has preserved its walls and contents remarkably well.

At one time, magically enhanced intelligent girallons tended the temple gardens for the monks while domesticated deinonychuses patrolled it and the temple precincts. A menagerie of animals brought from Mur was kept nearby. When the temple fell to the riders, the girallons retreated to area **13** to hide. The kamadans (see Appendix) and displacer beasts kept in captivity in the southern cells (area **12F**) escaped several days later and fought viciously for control over the garden. The kamadans managed to drive the displacer beasts off (they now dwell in area **21**), but were sorely wounded as well and went on to form an alliance with the girallons in the event of the displacer beasts' return to the garden. The displacer beasts never returned, and as the girallons' magical intelligence faded under the onslaught of generations of inbreeding, the remaining kamadans became the masters of this wing of the temple. They generally leave the garden to its own devices these days, and constantly plan for (but never quite get around to starting) an attack on the hated displacer beasts of the western temple.

During periods when the temple is trapped between worlds, living creatures within do not show the effects of aging (although they do still age normally), nor do they need to eat or drink. When the temple returns to the Material Plane, these biological functions quickly return. Creatures become ravenously hungry and thirsty, and as a result, whenever the temple phases back into the Material Plane, the living denizens become quite antagonistic and violent, falling upon each other and intruders with equal rapacity. This strangely accelerated environment results in a bizarre dual ecosystem, one of balance punctuated by relatively short periods of violence. Typically, there's just enough time between stormy seasons for savaged populations of girallons, deinonychuses, kamadans, and other monsters to recover and repopulate their numbers, in unknowing preparation for the next return to hunger and thirst. Note that by the time the PCs enter the temple, the denizens have already been through this stormy season's fluctuations several times. They still hunger each time the temple fades into the Material Plane, but they do not have nonlethal damage as a result of starvation when the PCs encounter them.

The party can enter the temple through the front gate, or they can scale the build-

ing walls with a DC 25 Climb check to reach the steep-angled terraced roofs (see "Temple Roofs" below). The walls, floor, and roofs of the temple are made of heavy blocks of greenish stone. Outer walls are 5 feet thick and inner walls are 1 foot thick. Doors are 4-foot-by-8-foot valves.

Mortared Stone Walls: 1 ft. to 5 ft. thick; Hardness 8; hp 90 hp per 1 ft. thickness; Break DC 35 (+5 per additional foot of thickness); Climb DC 20 for walls, DC 25 if wet.

Bronze-Clad Wooden Doors: 5 in. thick; Hardness 8; hp 45; Break DC 27; Open Lock DC 35.

TEMPLE ROOFS

The roof ascends steeply to the south and west and is covered in intricate carved shingles and bas-reliefs. Terraced bronze domes reach into the heights in several places, with hornlike spires at the corners.

The huge statue on the roof is a representation of Shensi the Serpent Spirit, chief obah of this temple. Its raised wings reach a height of 100 feet above the roof, and its coiling body stretches back almost 200 feet. Moving on the dragon requires a DC 15 Climb check (DC 20 when wet). Soaring sluices descend from the domes above area **27** to the dome above area **5**. These carry runoff from the cliffs to channels cut into the top edges of the dragon's wings. From there the water flows into the dragon's head and out its mouth as a waterfall.

Walking on the roofs themselves requires a DC 10 Climb check (DC 15 when wet) every round, and a failure of 5 or more results in a fall as the character loses her footing and falls or slides to another section. From the roofs it is possible to descend into the gardens or plaza at areas **12** and **27** or climb down through openings in the ceilings of areas **5**, **14**, **21**, **23**, or **24**. Every minute spent on the roof carries a 25% chance of a random encounter.

TALKING WITH MONSTERS

The temple's inhabitants are strange and monstrous, but in many cases they're also intelligent. Some groups, like the girallons and deinonychuses, are little more than hunger-driven animals, and act as such when encountered. Other groups, like the kamadans, displacer beasts, or chokers are smart enough to carry on conversations if the language barrier can be breached. Most of the monsters in this adventure begin encounters as hostile; exceptions are noted in the text. If a group of monsters can be made at least friendly via diplomacy or magic, they'll be willing to discuss life in the temple. Note that most of the monsters have fairly limited areas of maneuverability, and that none of them know why the temple fades in and out of time and space. None of them remember the original monks who lived here, and all of them hate and fear the scorned riders.

1. FRONT APPROACH

Shallow water cascading from the mouth of the dragon statue above swirls down steps rising to a shadowed terrace at the front of the temple. The greenish stone building rises in sections to the sides and above, clinging to the cliff face. In several places on the ascending roofs, huge beehive-shaped prominences of tarnished bronze rise into the watery sky. These domelike roofs are covered in dozens of niches holding shadow-obscured statues that peer down upon those standing before the temple's entrance.

The center of the pool is 10 feet deep. Anyone coming within 20 feet of the center of the current must make a DC 20 Swim check each round to avoid being swept north 30 feet per round.

2. TERRACE PORCH (EL 8)

Slender columns of polished stone rise fifty feet to support the overhanging roof. Sinuous serpentine dragon carvings twist around the columns for their entire length. A faint tinkling comes from wind chimes suspended high overhead, barely audible above the roar of the water.

The massive doors are unlocked. A nearby alcove contains a small fountain of water flowing over stacked pebbles and provided the contemplative Shensite monks with a spectacular view of the valley.

Anyone attempting to move through the waterfall must make a DC 25 Strength check or be thrown to the ground for 3d6 damage, in which case a creature must make a DC 15 Reflex save each round to avoid being swept into the pool in area **1**. Moving through a waterfall square costs four squares of movement.

Creature: Chained to the back wall of the alcove is a behir captured by the Storm Riders. It has been cowed by the scorned humans, and won't attack the Storm Riders themselves. Bluff or Disguise checks opposed by the behir's Sense Motive or Spot can be attempted to try to fool it if the characters wear Storm Rider armor. The behir's chain, which is manacled to one of its rear legs, allows it to reach up to 20 feet outside the alcove. If it spots characters approaching in the water below it unleashes its breath weapon into their midst, affecting everyone within 10 feet.

Behir: hp 94; *Monster Manual* 25.

3. TEMPLE FOYER (EL 10)

A cavernous hall stretches away to either side, and a large, bronze double door stands in the center of the southern wall. Four stone-railed balconies, staggered at different heights, flank these doors. Serpentine-carved columns stretch up to the ceiling sixty feet overhead.

Roof Encounter Table

1. **1d4 displacer beasts:** hp 51 each; *Monster Manual* 66.
2. **2d4 blessed chokers:** hp 39 each; see Appendix.
3. **1 will-o'-wisp:** See area **27**. If this creature is killed, only three are encountered in area **27**. This encounter occurs only once.
4. **Tendriculos:** hp 94; *Monster Manual* 241.
5. **1d3 Kamadans:** hp 76 each; see Appendix.
6. **1 behir:** hp 94; *Monster Manual* 25. This creature is seeking its mate, who was captured by the raiders a month ago. It can only be encountered once.

The floor of this chamber is cluttered with bits of rubble and cobweb-shrouded skeletons pushed to the edges and corners.

This is where the main battle for the temple was fought between Histchok's riders and the monks' girallon and kamadan guardians. The downfall of the monks came when several of them charged out to assist their faithful servitors from the secret door. They underestimated the raiders' numbers, and when the riders defeated the defenders here they charged through the secret door and gained access to the temple's vulnerable interior. The skeletons scattered on the floor are those of a few humans and horses as well as a number of girallons and kamadans.

The secret door can be found with a DC 35 Search check. Alternately, a DC 25 Survival check by someone with the Track feat locates scuffs on the hard stone floor indicating that iron-shod beasts have traveled between the northern door and a point on the wall beneath the eastern balconies. This knowledge grants a +10 circumstance bonus on Search checks to locate the secret door.

Stone Secret Door: 4 in. thick; Hardness 8; hp 60; Break DC 28.

Creatures: A girallon keeps a watch on the entrance from the eastern balcony. Upon sighting intruders it bellows and beats its chest, alerting its fellows in area 7. It doesn't attack the PCs yet, preferring to bellow and roar at them until they attack it or its allies arrive. The girallons fear and avoid the Storm Riders and might be fooled by disguises, but if the PCs have taken no such steps, the girallons quickly mobilize to defend their territory. These girallons have learned to throw jagged chunks of stone at their enemies, and do so as soon as at least three targets are in this room. The stones have a range increment of 20 feet. There are 20 stones stacked on each balcony.

Five rounds after the party enters, a girallon emerges onto each of the eastern balconies, at which point they all begin hurling rocks. The remaining two wait in the hallway behind for climbing or flying characters to approach. If two are killed, the rest flee to area 7 to regroup.

Girallons (4): hp 58 each; Ranged 4 stones +9 (1d6+6); *Monster Manual* 126.

4. HALL OF MEMORY (EL 12)

This long hall rises in a succession of wide flights of stairs. The ceiling, twenty feet above, rises smoothly along with the floor. A blue radiance from thousands of short gray candles burning with eerie blue flames lights the hall. These candles are set all across the floors and steps of the hall, leaving only a narrow cleared path down the center.

The thousands of candles here have all been enchanted with *continual flame*. There is only one unobstructed path, but there is no harm in walking among or even stepping on the tapers. However, a trap has been placed at the midpoint of the hall and is activated whenever anyone crosses the dotted line, regardless of whether they are on the cleared path or among the candles. The Storm Riders avoid this hall as a result.

Creatures: A pair of terra-cotta statues of warriors dressed in Murian armor stand to either side of the southernmost end of the hall. Anyone who approaches to the foot of the southernmost stairwell activates both of these clay golems, causing them to animate into poses of wary guardianship. They do not attack unless they are themselves attacked, or if someone climbs to the top of this flight of stairs. They do not pursue foes beyond this chamber.

Clay Golems (2): hp 90 each; *Monster Manual* 134.

Trap: Whenever anyone walks across the floor just south of the first flight of stairs, the ceiling above that area creases in the middle and swings down on great hinges in 20-foot-long sections from either side to smash together like clapping hands in the center of the hall. The candles in the area are cunningly arranged so that the swinging panels don't quite hit any of them, and, of course, their flames are never snuffed.

Swinging Ceiling Trap: CR 10; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; DC 20 Reflex save avoids (18d6, crush); multiple targets (can strike all characters in the shaded area); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 25.

5. FOUNTAIN CHAMBER

Glistening bas-reliefs cover the moistened walls of this chamber. A bronze, terraced dome soars a hundred feet overheard with an opening to the sky above. A steady rainfall descends through this into a large fountain in the room's center. The fountain has a lip of deep green stone surrounding a shallow basin with a central plinth from which a spume of water ascends. Wrapped in great coils around the central plinth is a massive serpentine bronze dragon cast in verdigris bronze with wings folded at its flanks.

Treasure: The fountain represents Shensi the Serpent Spirit. A DC 22 Search check of the fountain reveals a compartment hidden in the stone plinth. The compartment is sealed by an *arcane lock* (caster level 10th); within are five *potions of cure serious wounds* and a jar of *Keoghtom's ointment*.

6. LANDING

This area is unremarkable, other than the fact that stairs rising from each direction make it a good defensive position. A secret passage between areas 3 and 15 runs under this landing.

7. GUARDROOM (EL 11)

This bare chamber has a ceiling sixty feet overhead. Thirty-five feet up the west wall, a window looks down upon the room. Mounds of debris, animal fur, droppings, and bones indicate that several creatures normally inhabit this chamber. The air smells as foul as one might expect.

Creatures: Five girallons normally occupy this room. One girallon is always on watch at the balconies in area 3. If the party battled the girallons in area 3, remove any of their number slain there from this room. The fifth girallon always remains behind here. Any combat that erupts here quickly draws the attention of the kamadans in area 8.

Girallons (5): hp 58 each; *Monster Manual* 126.

Temple of Celestial Winds
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One square = 10 feet

8. GARDEN OVERLOOK (EL 10)

This bare chamber reeks of wet fur and rotting meat. An archway to the south opens onto a balcony overlooking a lush garden lit occasionally by the lightning of the storm outside. The room's only furnishing is a stone couch against the north wall. The smell seems to come from a large nest of rubble and plant matter astride this couch, in which the partially-eaten body of a large lizard-like creature is draped.

Creatures: A mated pair of kamadans dwells in this chamber. Once, the Shensite monks kept several domesticated kamadans and other dangerous creatures as exotic pets for the temple garden (area **12**), but over the last few centuries, the offspring of these creatures have reverted to their wild natures. The dead deinonychus in their nest is one of their recent kills from the garden.

Kamadans (2): hp 76 each; see Appendix.

Treasure: A DC 18 Search check locates an intricate jade bracelet, carved of a single piece to look like interlocking vines and leaves, worth 450 gp.

9. MURAL ROOM

The walls of this chamber are painted with murals of fantastically peaked mountains covered in jungle growth, with precariously hanging palaces that could only exist in an imaginative mind. The colors of the murals remain bright, as if painted only yesterday. The rest of the room is spotlessly clean, with several stone benches spaced around the room.

The girallons maintain this room meticulously, taken as they are with the bright colors of the paint on the walls. Consider the girallons in areas **10** and **11** to be always taking 10 on their Listen rolls for sounds of disturbance in here. If they hear anyone, all of the adult girallons in those two areas rush in and attack in a rage over the violation of their sacred chamber.

10. GARDEN KITCHENS (EL 8)

Ovens and hearths of smooth stones comprise the northern wall of this chamber. High on this wall, narrow windows allow a slight breeze and a few spatters of rain into the chamber. Between the ovens are heavy wooden cabinets and shelves inset into the stone walls. Numerous bits of debris and broken furniture litter the floor.

This kitchen once served the Shensites who often chose to take their meals in the pleasant surroundings of the garden veranda. Now it serves as a nursery for the girallons.

Creatures: Four adult girallons watch over seven young girallons who playfully cavort about the chamber. The girallons in here have a –5 penalty on their Listen checks due to the racket their young make. The girallon young are only a few years old, yet are already quite ferocious. They attack along with the adults, but do so only with bite attacks. When the characters enter this room, the adults herd the young girallons into the far corner and roar for assistance from area **11**. Any girallons and kamadans from that room arrive in 3 rounds.

Girallons (2): hp 58 each; *Monster Manual* 126.

Young Girallons (7): hp 5 each; *Monster Manual* 268 (baboon).

11. GARDEN VERANDA (EL 12)

Where the southern wall should be is a wide opening looking out on an overgrown, rain-soaked garden of exotic plants. Two red-tiled columns support this archway, matching the hexagonal red tiles that comprise the floor. A massive table composed of a single slab of gray slate supported by many skillfully carved oak legs dominates the center of this chamber. On either side of this table runs a long wooden bench. Clay vessels on the table are stacked with a variety of fruits and tubers.

This open room served as a dining hall for the Shensites, who chose to forego taking meals in the kitchen or the cloisters in favor of the peaceful gardens.

Creatures: This room serves as the main common area for the girallon tribe that inhabits the temple. Currently four girallons and two allied kamadans rest in this room.

Girallons (4): hp 58 each; *Monster Manual* 126.

Kamadans (2): hp 76 each; see Appendix.

12. MEDITATION GARDENS (EL 13)

This rain-soaked garden is like some exotic, tropical jungle. Illuminated by periodic flashes of lightning, unfamiliar plant life grows in wild abundance here, having been left untended for years. A twenty-foot-wide overhang supported by great square columns sixty feet tall surrounds the tropical enclave. Vines and other plant life cover these columns and hang like green curtains in some sections. A balcony protrudes beneath the overhang in the garden's northwest corner. Gray stone pools and fountains protrude from the greenery of the garden sporadically, and in some places reveal glimpses of white—like polished bone. The air here is strangely warm and comfortable, despite the torrential rain.

The Shensites created this garden of exotic plants from Mur to serve as an oasis for peaceful meditation in a foreign land. The blessings of Mumar, the Obah of Soil, allow these plants to survive and thrive in the harsher climate of southern Perrenland, while the blessings of Ciomar, the Obah of Mountain Springs, ensures that the garden's water supply is not only constantly refreshed, but remains pure and drinkable. Finally, the influence of Zinrial, Obah of Fertility, ensures that creatures and plants here grow quickly and breed true. This final influence is perhaps the most important, for the garden ecosystem is fast, brutal, and deadly. Carvings of all three obahs, with short verses listing their names and virtues, decorate the sides of the pools here.

Due to its size and complexity, the garden is divided into several areas keyed to specific letters. Most of the skeletal remains scattered throughout the garden are girallon, kamadan, or deinonychus bones.

The entire garden should be considered light undergrowth for movement purposes (it costs 2 squares of movement

to move through such an area, and the DC of Tumble and Move Silently checks increases by 2).

Creatures: The garden supports a wide variety of plant and animal life, most of it harmless. Flowers, vines, insects, snakes, lizards, and spiders are present in great numbers, as are scores of miserable rain-soaked monkeys that lurk high in the trees or along the surrounding roof edges. The most dangerous mobile inhabitants of the area are the deinonychuses, now feral dinosaurs once kept by the Shensites as trained guardians. They rove the garden in two packs of four, and generally avoid each other, but when the two packs do meet, they do so violently.

As the PCs explore this area, they'll quickly attract one of these two packs. The dinosaurs approach stealthily, attempting to surround the PCs before sending one of their number out to challenge them. As soon as this lone dinosaur is attacked, the remaining spring out from ambush to flank and pounce on the attacker. Combat with this group of feral deinonychuses quickly attracts the attention of the second pack, who moves in to observe the first battle. They lunge to attack the victors only a round after the last enemy is defeated, hoping to down an already weakened group of creatures.

One pack of dinosaurs nests in the northwestern section of the garden under the balcony from area **8**, while the others nest in the ancient cells to the south (area **12F**).

GRIZZLED DEINONYCHUS (8) CR 7

Advanced elite deinonychus
N Medium animal
Monster Manual 60
Init +4; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +10, Spot +10

AC 19, touch 14, flat-footed 15
hp 92 (8 HD)
Fort +13, **Ref** +10, **Will** +4

Spd 60 ft.
Melee talons +11 (2d6+5) and 2 foreclaws +9 (1d3+2) and bite +9 (2d4+2)
Base Atk +6; **Grp** +11
Atk Options pounce

Abilities Str 21, Dex 18, Con 24, Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 8
Feats Improved Natural Attack (talons), Multiattack, Track
Skills Hide +17, Jump +31, Listen +10, Spot +10, Survival +10

12A. HANGING DOOM (EL 10)

In this corner of the garden is a long shallow pool. A wide mangrove tree grows in the midst of the stone-rimmed pool. An incoming channel of water that originates from a stone fountain barely visible beneath a massive curtain of hanging green vines and branches feeds the pool clear, fresh water.

The stone fountain stands 20 feet tall and resembles a tall figure that seems to resemble both a mountain and a great tree. This is a representation of Mumar, Obah of earth.

Creature: Living amidst the dangling curtain of foliage is an assassin vine grown massive and powerful with age. Mumar's influence has kept the carnivorous plant alive, as the denizens of the garden know about it and take pains to avoid its haunts. The vine itself has grown complacent as a result, and while it lashes out at anything that comes in reach, it no longer bothers to move about to pursue fleeing prey.

ANCIENT ASSASSIN VINE CR 10

Advanced elite assassin vine
N Huge plant
Monster Manual 20
Init +0; **Senses** blindsight 30 ft., low-light vision; Listen +2, Spot +2

AC 17, touch 8, flat-footed 17
hp 216 (16 HD)
Immune electricity; plant traits
Resist cold 10, fire 10
Fort +19, **Ref** +5, **Will** +7

Spd 5 ft.
Melee slam +21 (1d8+16)
Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 30 ft.
Base Atk +12; **Grp** +31

Kamadan

Atk Options constrict 1d8+16, improved grab (slam),entangle (Reflex DC 20 partial)
Abilities Str 32, Dex 11, Con 28, Int —, Wis 14, Cha 9
SQ camouflage

Treasure: A DC 20 Search check among the assassin vine's roots and foliage locates the remains of a planar explorer who discovered the temple as it touched on a distant plane. He barely made it into the garden before he ran afoul of the assassin vine. Jumbled in the shallow basin is his suit of gold *celestial armor*, a +1 *mithral heavy shield*, and a +1 *thundering warhammer*.

12B. STILL POOL (EL 6)

An immense tree root has grown through the lip of the western pool, crumbling the stone and creating a delta of streams as it overflows. These streams form a maze of rivulets before emptying into a wide, dark pool against the garden's walls. Barely visible in the gloom beneath the plant-shrouded overhang are two doors partially submerged in this still pool.

This pool reaches a depth of three feet to the southwest. The floor of the pool is composed of a layer of silt and mud a foot deep and is equivalent to a shallow bog. The swollen door to the south is unlocked, but can be opened with a DC 23 Strength check. The west door is locked, sealed, and trapped. The door opens to the west, and the Storm Riders have riveted an iron plate to the backside of the door to prevent ingress from the garden. Simply opening the lock is not sufficient to get through the door, though it reduces the break DC.

Bronze-Clad Door Backed with Iron Plate: 6 in. thick; Hardness 10; hp 75; Break DC (Locked) 35, (Unlocked) 28; Open Locks 25.

Trap: If the iron plate is forced open, a fusillade of spears are released from the roof above into the area in front of the door.

Fusillade of Spears: *CR 6;* mechanical; touch trigger; repair reset; Atk +21 ranged (1d8, spear); multiple targets (1d6 spears per target in a 10-ft.-by-10-ft. area); Search DC 30; Disable Device DC 40.

12C. FLOODED ROOM (EL 5)

Whatever purpose this small room once served is no longer clear, for now it is empty save for a foot of standing water and a few vines and creepers dangling from the fifteen-foot ceiling.

This former storage room is empty save for a trap. A DC 18 Search check locates a 2-foot-square tunnel hidden in the shadows near the ceiling. This tunnel leads to area **12D**.

Trap: The obah-blessed chokers that dwell in area **12D** have rigged one of the vines dangling from the ceiling into a noose. The first creature entering the room from area **12** trips the trap, causing the noose to drop around his neck. Unless the character makes a DC 17 Reflex save, he is hauled up to a height of 10 feet to slowly strangle to death. Each round as a standard action, the character can make a DC 20 Escape Artist check to escape. The character can still attack with light weapons, but spells with verbal components are impossible. Any other spell requires a DC 15 Concentration check to cast. The noose can be cut with a slashing weapon (AC 11, Hardness 0, hp 5), although the trapped character makes attacks against the vine at a –4 penalty.

Vine Noose Trap: CR 5; mechanical; location trigger; repair reset; DC 17 Reflex save avoids (suffocation, see *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 304); Search DC 22; Disable Device DC 20.

12D. CHOKER LAIR (EL 8)

This cramped chamber arches up to a height of nearly twenty-five feet. The walls of the chamber are covered with crude paintings of lizards and strange animals and figures with too many arms. A thick, rancid layer of droppings and bones covers the floor.

Access to this small chamber is by way of three 2-foot-by-2-foot entrances, two high on the walls of areas **12C** and **12E** and one on the wall of the main garden (area **12**). The tunnels themselves are cramped, forcing Medium creatures to squeeze to pass through them (–4 on attack, –4 to AC, double movement cost). Large creatures cannot enter without a DC 30 Escape Artist check and can't attack, losing their Dexterity bonus to AC in addition to the –4 penalty. Small creatures can move and attack unimpeded.

Creatures: Several obah-blessed chokers, each with four arms rather than two, now dwell in this area. These creatures are similar to those encountered elsewhere in the temple, yet they view this area as ancestrally important rather than as a place of taboo. They carved these tunnels and this chamber from the temple's walls over the centuries, and defend their home noisily and aggressively.

Obah-blessed Chokers (4): hp 39; see Appendix.

Treasure: Concealed under some loose rubble at the south end of the lair is the tribe's accumulated treasure. A DC 22 Search check locates a hematite mirror with a skillfully carved frame worth 85 gp, 480 gp minted in some foreign currency (Muranni), a single diamond earring worth 250 gp, and a pair of *gloves of arrow snaring*.

12E. CHOKER CAGE

The door to an iron cage hangs askew by one hinge. Logs lie broken and rotting on the floor within. The few that remain intact are overgrown with vines and plants from the garden.

This cage once served as the lair for the chokers brought to the temple by the Shensites. Now the cage stands empty. A DC 18 Search check reveals a 2-foot-square tunnel hidden in the shadows near the ceiling. This tunnel leads to area **12D**.

12F. EMPTY CAGES

Each of these cages has a broken rusty cage door hanging open. These cages once held displacer beasts, dire animals, dinosaurs, and various other large creatures. They now serve as nests for one of the packs of deinonychuses who have inherited the garden.

12G. CLOGGED POOL

The murky waters of this stone pool are overshadowed by a tall willow tree. A stone

fountain depicting a figure resembling both a geyser of water and a beautiful humanoid woman feeds this pool by way of a stone channel.

This pool is 5 feet deep. The fountain is a depiction of Ciomar, Obah of Mountain Springs.

13. EMPTY HOMES (EL 9)

This long, dusty hall opens into several empty cell-like rooms. The rooms are bare of furnishings and have no doors.

The two doors into the garden (area **12**) have been locked and jammed shut with heavy debris stacked against them to prevent incursions. They require a DC 30 Strength check to force open.

This hall was once the abode of the intelligent girallons who served the Shensites. The girallons still dwell here, but have expanded into areas **7–11** as well.

Creatures: The girallon leader's mates patrol this area. Unless accompanied by another member of the girallon company, these three specimens attack any intruders with a fury. Their shrieks and bellows immediately alert Jiba in area **14**, who comes to investigate in 3 rounds.

Girallons (3): hp 58 each; *Monster Manual* 126.

14. SHRINE OF GOBAL THE DANCER (EL 9)

This vast chamber rises to a terraced bronze dome ninety feet overhead. The stormy sky above is visible through a large hole at the dome's apex. A soft patter of rain soaks the floor beneath this skylight. Against the east wall rests a massive green copper statue. The statue stands over forty feet tall and depicts an immensely fat man seated cross-legged with sixteen arms raised and holding various objects from weapons to ornaments to strange musical instruments. His face bears a leering grin, and a single horn protrudes from his forehead.

This room is a shrine to Gobal the Dancer, Obah of Prosperity and Success. The statue has remained undisturbed since the attack of Histchok's riders, quietly tended by the faithful girallons who once claimed Gobal as their patron obah.

Creature: The current occupant of this room is Jiba, an ancient 20-foot-tall girallon. Jiba is a prodigy, a throwback to an earlier time. He retains the intelligence and even the memories of his girallon ancestors, and remembers clearly his home in Mur before the Shensites left. He is not only the leader of the temple girallons but also the father of all the generations currently living in the temple. His great age is evident in his dark silver, almost black, fur. Jiba is also blessed by the obahs with a third pair of tremendous arms. He spends much of his time lounging in the shadows to Gobal's left as he pours over several ancient texts he stole from elsewhere in the temple many years ago.

JIBA **CR 11**

Male obah-blessed advanced girallon
N Huge magical beast
Monster Manual 126
Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +1, Spot +17

Languages Muranni

AC 21, touch 14, flat-footed 15
hp 162 (13 HD)
Fort +17, **Ref** +14, **Will** +7

Spd 40 ft., climb 40 ft.
Melee* 6 claws +20 (1d6+19/19–20) and bite +15 (2d6+12)
Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.
Base Atk +13; **Grp** +35
Atk Options Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack, rend 2d6+21
*5-point Power Attack

Abilities Str 38, Dex 22, Con 24, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 12
Feats Great Fortitude, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (claw), Iron Will, Power Attack
Skills Climb +22, Spot +17

Tactics: Despite his great strength and monstrous shape, Jiba does not attack immediately upon sighting the PCs unless he knows they have slain many of his kin. He prefers to silently observe the party and let them make the opening move. Jiba's initial attitude is indifferent, and he can be an excellent source of information about the temple if the PCs establish communication with him. He would greatly enjoy seeing the scorned riders expunged from the temple.

If, on the other hand, the PCs attack Jiba or slay many of his girallon kin, the great obah-blessed monster does not hesitate to rise in his home's defense. He pursues enemies throughout the temple if they've killed other girallons, otherwise he won't chase them beyond the boundaries of this room.

Treasure: Jiba's collection of Murian books is well-cared for, and the brightly illuminated texts are worth a total of 2,500 gp to a collector.

15. STABLES (EL 8)

The ceiling vaults high above this long chamber, supported by rows of intricately carved columns that give the place a feeling of ancient grandeur. It has seen better days, however, as the floor is partially flooded with a stagnant pool at the base of the east wall.

This room was once partitioned into cloisters by the Shensite monks. Since the Storm Riders took control of the temple, they have removed the partitions and converted this room into a stable for their mounts. The pool is only a few inches deep and results from seepage under the wall from the garden. See area **12B** for details on the eastern door. From this side of the door, Search and Disable Device checks against the door's trap have a +20 circumstance bonus. The secret door to the north is identical to the one in area **3**. At the southern end of the room a narrow stair climbs 30 feet to a door high on the wall.

16. KITCHENS (EL 8)

The reek of unwashed bodies mingles with the stench of foul cooking in here. Great fireplaces line the east wall, one of which holds a massive brass kettle over a banked fire. Foodstuffs are stacked throughout the room, and a great chopping block is covered with bloody cuts of meat. A massive bed, crudely cobbled together, stands against the south wall next to a large bag.

This was once the Shensites' main kitchen. The Storm Riders no longer need to eat, but they realize they need to feed their prisoners to keep them alive. The foodstuffs stored here have all been stolen during recent raids, and the cuts of meat appear to be from draft horses and oxen.

Creature: This room is still occupied by the Shensites' original cook, a long-lived athach named Brakalan they brought with them from Mur long ago. Its redemption and training as a cook was once viewed as a major triumph of the monks. The Storm Riders spared it because it did not attack and they did not wish to provoke it. Now, under their influence, it has gone back to its foul and disgusting roots.

Brakalan, athach: hp 133; *Monster Manual* 21.

Treasure: Brakalan is paid a stipend of treasure by Ataman Histchok from the riders' plunder, and the athach keeps this booty in a large sack by his bed. The sack holds filthy rags and all manner of odds and ends. Among this detritus there are 30 bloodstones worth 50 gp each and 7 amethysts worth 100 gp each.

Development: Brakalan attempts to flee south if reduced below 30 hit points. If captured or made compliant, he can reveal that he and the Storm Riders are seemingly immortal and that Ataman Histchok is an unnatural beast that lives somewhere to the south. He is not familiar with the layout of the temple, having spent the majority of his life in areas **16** and **25**. He was recently told to prepare meals for the ataman's "guests" to the south, but he does not know who or what they are.

17. THE TWISTING CORRIDOR

This maddening region is known as the Twisting Corridor. It was constructed by the Shensites as a course of progressive meditation. The walls are adorned with bas-relief iconography, and the winding passage is dotted with numerous alcoves. Some of these alcoves hold statuary depicting various obahs, and some hold guardian golems. At each of the alcoves, the walls above the statuary are engraved with verses from Shensite philosophy. These are inscribed in ancient Muranni and are unintelligible to the party unless magic is used or one of the PCs can read Ancient Baklunish, in which case she can piece together what is written with a successful DC 25 Decipher Script check. Even then, the inscriptions only deal with weighty philosophical matters pertaining to the Shensites and are of no value to the party.

Shensite monks spent hours wandering down the hallway moving from station to station in silent contemplation. They prevented the golems from attacking by making the proper Shensite observances relevant to that station's particular inscription. These are, of course, long since lost, providing the characters with no such safe passage. When the Shensites finally emerged onto the balconies overlooking area **3** they were considered to have reached a state of enlightenment.

The western, elevated portion of the corridor lies beneath the 100-foot-high bronze dome and is wet due to the louvers at the dome's apex that allow the rainfall to enter. The louvers are small enough that only Small creatures or smaller can attempt to squeeze through

to reach the roof. These details are not immediately apparent because after 30 feet, the solid walls end and become a tangled maze of carved stone lattices and supports. No creature larger than size Small can move through this shadowy maze without constant DC 30 Escape Artist checks, and even then creatures unfamiliar with this environment must make DC 15 Climb checks to move along the supports.

It is in this gloomy labyrinth suspended high above the ground that the remaining obah-blessed chokers from the Garden have taken up residence. They can access the roof through the louvers, but consider the Twisting Corridor their domain. They are careful to not activate the guardian golems by always traveling above them. Individual encounters with the chokers are described throughout this area.

17A. CORRIDOR EGRESS

This small chamber is obscured by cobwebs that also fill the exit passages both north and south. Clearly no one has been here in some time. Stone benches rest against north and east walls, and stone tables holding cobweb-draped ewers stand between them. Shapeless lumps lie on the floor, hidden under a layer of webbing and dust.

This chamber provided rest and refreshment for the Shensites after they had completed the mental rigors of the Twisted Corridor. The ewers once held water and light wines and have goblets clustered around them. The web-covered lumps are two decayed girallon corpses festooned with arrows. These creatures were killed when the temple was invaded. The other corpse is a desiccated displacer beast. It is evident that this beast has several broken limbs and a caved-in ribcage. This creature braved the Twisted Corridor some years back and managed to reach this room before dying from the pummeling it received from the golems.

Treasure: The three ewers and twelve goblets are all silver and of ancient Muranni craftsmanship. They are worth 100 gp per ewer and 75 gp per goblet.

17B. SHENSI THE SERPENT SPIRIT

A coiling statue of malachite occupies the alcove here. It is recognizable as the same dragonlike creature that is represented on the roof of this temple. Lines of an unfamiliar language are inscribed on the wall above it.

This is a simply a harmless part of the corridor's meditative sequence. The verse above it reads, "Shensi the Serpent Spirit, in whose great wisdom we are all but dreams."

17C. LAST GUARDIAN (EL 12)

Two alcoves with glazed clay statues occupy this corner next to the stairs that twist up to the north and west. The southern statue resembles a large dog with a benign grin on its face. The western statue is of peaceful six-armed man in strange, exotic armor. Lines of an unknown script fill the walls above the statue of the dog.

The dog statue is merely one of the minor obahs revered by the Shensites. Its script reads, "Tektek the Faithful, whose constant friendship and loyalty shame us with every breath."

Creature: The six-armed statue is in fact an obah-blessed clay golem. It attacks any who attempt to pass by it, pursuing only as far as the next statue location in either direction.

Obah-blessed Clay Golem: hp 90; see Appendix.

17D. FOUL OBAH

A statue of jet-black stone fills this alcove with its menacing presence. It resembles a hideous man with a fly's face and hunched shoulders. Lines of text highlighted by a red wash are inscribed in the wall above.

This figure represents one of the evil obahs recognized by the Shensites. Called Balim in their culture, a DC 25 Knowledge (religion) check recognizes it as a classic depiction of the archdevil Baalzebul, who managed the feat of being accepted by the ancients as a spirit of the world through his capacity for lies. The statue is hideous but harmless. The script above reads, "Balim the Pretender, who endures that the lies of the world do not."

17E. TWIN GUARDIANS (EL 12)

To the east, the corridor is dry, but starting here a patina of moisture covers floor and walls alike. A fine mist drizzles down from the gloom high above amidst a tangle of iconography and support structures. Twin statues of men in outlandish garb flank the corridor in alcoves. Writing is inscribed on the walls above the statues in an unknown language.

A DC 25 Listen check reveals soft scrabbling and shuffling noises from the darkness somewhere above. These are caused by the movements of chokers climbing throughout the dome above but cannot be pinpointed to any single location. No chokers can be spotted from here.

Creature: Two clay golems guard the passage here. They attack any who try to pass between them and pursue as far as the next statue location. If the characters pass above them by either climbing or flying, the golems do not attack.

Clay Golems (2): hp 90; *Monster Manual* 134.

17F. CHOKER TERRITORY (EL 9)

A statue stands here facing the east wall. It resembles a massive eight-armed gorilla with no legs, supported by the knuckles of two of its arms. Its ferocious snarl is captured beneath a patina of moisture caused by a steady drizzle falling from above. This statue is in the center of the corridor and appears to have been moved from its alcove. Lines of text are inscribed in the wall above.

This statue represents the obah Karkush, patron of the wild girallons of Mur (though not revered by the domesticated girallons of this temple). It has been moved by the chokers from its alcove to

the west to block the corridor. The statue weighs 4,700 lbs. Unless the party wishes to move it, they can either climb over its 20-foot height or go around it by passing through the western alcove where they are subjected to the Trap and an ambush by the Creatures.

The line of script above its alcove reads, "Karkush the Ferocious, the ruin of the jungle heights."

Creatures: Four obah-blessed chokers wait in the darkness 50 feet above the alcove. They wait for the Trap to be triggered and then spring down to ambush anyone caught below.

Obah-blessed Chokers (4): hp 39; see Appendix.

Trap: The chokers have rigged the stone supports above the 30-foot-high western wall of the alcove to collapse on anyone who steps into the alcove. Quick-thinking characters may realize that this collapse has cleared a space through the tangled maze above, and indeed, climbing the western wall does allow passage into the corridor beyond.

Collapsing Wall: CR 6; mechanical; proximity trigger; no reset; Atk +20 melee (8d6, stone blocks); multiple targets (all targets in the 10-ft.-by-10-ft. alcove); Search DC 24; Disable Device DC 16.

17G. THE MANY ARMS OF FATE

Standing solemnly in an alcove is a statue carved of greenish-gray stone. Eight arms rise from its flanks in various postures of thought and action. The statue's body resembles a single huge eye. The constant precipitation falling from high above coats the statue's leering face like a sheen of sweat. Lines of text are inscribed in the wall above.

This statue represents an obah of fate. The line of text above reads, "Agalamar the Silent, whose fingers guide us to our fate as surely as our spirits yearn for freedom."

17H. INTERSECTION (EL 12)

The corridor here branches into a T-intersection. To the southwest a stair descends into the dripping darkness, and to the east a statue of a six-armed man wearing exotic armor looms.

To the west lies the main demesne of the chokers.

Creature: The six-armed statue is in fact an obah-blessed clay golem. It attacks any who attempt to pass by it, pursuing only as far as the next statue location in either direction.

Obah-blessed Clay Golem: hp 90; see Appendix.

17I. REALM OF THE MOUNTAIN STRANGLERS (EL 11)

A short stair descends to a dead-end ahead. The constant drizzle has flooded this lower section to a depth of a couple inches. Standing at the end of this corridor is a statue in blue stone that depicts a tall woman dressed in revealing robes. Her carven face has an ageless beauty, yet the eyes glint with a faint hint of cruelty. A shimmering line of script is carved into the stone above.

This statue depicts Shamarae, a notorious obah of Mur. A DC 30 Knowledge (religion) check identifies her as Shami-Amourae, once the queen of succubi but now exiled to an unknown part of the Abyss by her successor Malcanthet. The script above reads, "Shamarae the Lover, promising bliss and delivering loss."

This dead end serves as the primary lair of the chokers and is where they keep their accumulated Treasure. The water does not cause any hindrance to movement or combat.

Creatures: Hiding in the darkness above this section of corridor are a dozen obah-blessed chokers. They are not visible unless the characters can see into the darkness 100 feet above, but Listen checks opposed by their Move Silently checks can detect surreptitious shuffling and whispers from above.

Obah-blessed Chokers (12): hp 39; see Appendix.

Tactics: Six chokers attack from above and behind the party to gain surprise on the initial assault. They try to push unaware characters down the stairs (1d6 points of damage) and then grapple them. The remaining six chokers hang back, swarming down as others fall to replace ranks as needed. Once nine chokers are slain, the survivors attempt to flee back up into the latticework above and quit bothering the PCs.

Treasure: The total hoard of this choker tribe is hidden in the hollow on the back side of the statue and can be located with a DC 20 Search check. The hoard consists of 280 gp, 550 sp, 19 pp, a small golden statue of Gobal (see area 14) worth 1,200 gp, 6 large silver spoons worth 20 gp each, and a hand-sized marble statue of an elephant (actually a *figurine of wondrous power*).

17J. CORRIDOR TRAP (EL 8)

The stairs are rain slick and end at a corridor extending to the east with an inch or two of standing water on the floor.

The Shensites were always aware of the possibility that intruders might enter their sacred precincts. For this reason they created a dead end here in the Twisting Corridor complete with a Trap. Furthermore, this is part of the chokers' territory and they guard this area as well.

Creatures: Three chokers lurk in the shadows 30 feet above the trapped section of corridor, attempting to hide among the stonework. They wait to drop and attack until the Trap is sprung or disabled. If two are killed, the other flees.

Obah-blessed Chokers (3): hp 39 each; see Appendix.

Trap: The corridor ends at a false door. Anyone stepping into the square marked with a "T" activates the trap. A scything blade springs from the wall at a height of 3 feet.

Wall Scythe Trap: CR 4; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset after 10 minutes; Atk +20 melee (2d4+8/×4, scythe); Search DC 21; Disable Device DC 18.

17K. LORD OF EARTH

An alcove to the south holds a statue of a beautiful but dangerous-looking female elf with long curving blades instead of hands. She seems to be spinning in a cyclone of dust and water. The steady pitter-patter of rain creates tiny rills flowing down its sur-

face. Writing in an unknown language is engraved on the walls above the statue.

The statue represents Wynnarth, an obah of wind and cyclones. The writing above the statue reads, "Wynnarth the Dervish, whose dance brings breath and whose breath brings death." A DC 30 Knowledge (religion) check identifies this obah as a variant of Gwynharwyf, a powerful eladrin and one of queen Morwel's consorts.

17L. FIRST STATION

A four-foot stone plinth rests in this alcove. Upon it rests a diorama of small gold and marble figures representing a jungle village with several human and animal occupants. A small platform at the center of the diorama is conspicuously empty, as if a figure that once rested there was removed. Strange writing covers the walls of the alcove, and one word has been inscribed in large letters in the same script on the front of the plinth. A fine mist falls from somewhere in the darkness above.

This first stop on the monks' journey of contemplation is a nostalgic representation of the village life of Mur in a simpler time before the Komali threat. If translated, the word inscribed on the plinth is "Corocor." This is the command word for the *figurine of wondrous power* in area **17I**.

17M. CORRIDOR INGRESS (EL 4)

Once colorful tapestries now lie in moldering shreds on the floor of this chamber. Mixed in with these tatters are patches of midnight black fur and piles of offal. A wild animal smell fills the chamber.

This was where the Shensites prepared themselves for the mental and spiritual rigors of the coming journey through the Twisted Corridor. The secret door can be found with a DC 24 Search check but is otherwise identical to the one in area 3.

Creature: This chamber is now the abode of a single sickly displacer beast that has been forced from the larger pride in area **21**. It lurks in the northeast corner of the room and springs to attack any who enter.

Displacer Beast: hp 31; *Monster Manual* 66.

18. CHAMBER OF 3,000 OBAHS

Tiers rise along the west wall of this room in five-foot steps. Lining these tiers are rows of miniature pedestals covered with fragments of painted pottery and dust. Interspersed throughout are short gray candles that burn with blue flames. On the central floor are numerous reed mats and rugs.

This chamber was once the primary shrine to the 3,000 Obahs revered by the Shensites of Mur. This chamber actually held 3,000 miniature statues of every imaginable shape and size clustered among the tiers. Unfortunately, Histchok long ago destroyed all of these statues in a fit of rage when he realized where the potent curse that had been visited upon him and his men came from.

As a result, the sadness and disappointment of the obahs remains strongest in this room. As long as the scorned riders live, anyone that enters this room must make a DC 15 Will save to avoid becoming overwhelmed with sadness and despair, suffering a –2 morale penalty on all attack rolls, saving throws, and skill checks for the following 24 hours. This is a curse that functions at caster level 15th that can be removed by a successful *break enchantment* or *remove curse*.

19. CRYPTS (EL 10)

The door to this room is gone. The bare stone ceiling rises to a mere fifteen feet. Shadowed corridors extend to the east. To the south is an open area with the crumbled remains of a statue of greenish stone. Dung and the foul remnants left by some wild beast litter that portion of the chamber.

The displacer beasts long ago destroyed the door to this the main crypts of the Shensites. The monsters also managed to destroy the statue to the south that once watched over the crypt, but they have not returned recently due to the presence of the chamber's new denizens. Down these passages are burial niches stacked three high in the walls. Each holds a human corpse in a state of near perfect preservation. This is due to the layer of translucent brown lacquer that completely covers each figure. These were all members of the Shensite Order that died after their arrival in the Yatil Mountains. None were interred with any valuables. Several of the corpses were blessed of the obahs, and have two or even four extra arms.

The ruined statue once depicted a twelve-foot-tall, painfully thin humanoid with six arms and the head of a long-snouted batlike creature. This was a statue of Veskerwan, the obah of death. If the PCs clear away the rubble around the statue's base, they reveal an inscription in Muranni that reads, "Watch over our brothers, mighty Veskerwan, that they may stay in your cradle and leave our dreams in peace."

Creature: When the displacer beasts ruined the statue of Veskerwan, they disturbed the memories of the Shensites buried here. Their spirits have grown uneasy over the years, and have now manifested as wraiths. In all, there are five wraiths haunting this chamber; the undead rise up to attack intruders 1d4 rounds after a living creature enters the room, but do not pursue intruders beyond the walls of the crypt.

Wraiths (6): hp 32 each; *Monster Manual* 258.

Treasure: Lost amidst the rubble of the broken statue is a *wand of cure serious wounds* with 33 charges.

20. EMBALMING ROOM (EL 13)

The doors to this room are locked. The displacer beasts instinctively shun these doors, sensing the festering evil that lies within.

The weight of ages rests on this silent, dusty chamber. Colorful murals showing rites of interment cover the walls. Two stone tubs lie near the eastern wall, with shelving between them holding all manner of jars, urns, and amphorae. Stone tables against the west wall stand

between cabinets and shelves holding wrappings, tools, and funerary items. One of the tables holds a brownish humanoid beneath a coating of dust.

Here, the Shensites coated their honored dead in a layer of lacquer before interring them in the crypts. The murals on the walls show the process in great detail. The inside of the stone tubs are stained brown from the old varnish.

Creature: The humanoid figure is a lacquered human corpse, the last Shensite to receive the treatment long ago. A DC 21 Spot check notices fine cracks in the lacquer at the mummified corpse's joints.

This particular Shensite was a man named Vestrilar. Secretly an adherent to Balim, obah of lies (see area **17D**), Vestrilar infiltrated the temple with the intent of stealing Shensite lore. He died of natural causes before he finished his mission and before his true nature was discovered by his "brothers." His body was being prepared for burial when the raiders attacked, and as a result he was never properly interred in the crypt. This sad event, combined with the fact that his spirit did not belong in a place sacred to Shensi, created a terrible festering rage. When the obahs scorned the raiders, the resulting wash of potent energy was all that was needed to trigger an unholy transformation in Vestrilar's body. He became animated as a powerful mummy, yet the same energies that created him bound him to this chamber. If he tries to leave this room, he immediately takes 2d12 points of damage per round as his desiccated body becomes infused with positive energy. Vestrilar has spent the last several centuries silently waiting in this chamber, hoping for someone to come and rescue him from his cursed state of being.

Vestrilar has thought long and hard on how he might escape his curse, and has come to realize that there are only three ways he can do so. First, if he can be transported to the Negative Energy Plane, he believes the energies of that place will overwhelm the obah's curse on him and allow him to travel where he may. Similarly, he believes that if enough negative energy is channeled through his body (in the form of inflict spells and energy drain attacks), the same effect can eventually be achieved here on the Material Plane. Barring these solutions, Vestrilar assumes a *break enchantment* spell can free him as well.

In life, Vestrilar was a favored soul of Balim, and in undeath he has retained his class abilities. A favored soul is similar to a sorcerer that casts divine spells; this base class is detailed in *Complete Divine*, but all the information you need to run an encounter with Vestrilar is given in his stat block below.

VESTRILAR **CR 13**

Male mummified human favored soul 10
NE Medium undead
Libris Mortis 110, *Complete Divine* 7
Init +10; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +5, Spot +5
Aura despair
Languages Draconic, Muranni

AC 31, touch 10, flat-footed 31
hp 65 (10 HD); **DR** 5/—
Immune undead traits
Resist cold 10, fire 10
Fort +9, **Ref** +9, **Will** +16
Weakness sonic

Spd 10 ft.
Melee slam +12 (1d8+5 plus mummy rot)
Base Atk +7; **Grp** +12
Spells Known (CL10th, ranged touch +7)
5th (4/day)—*greater command* (DC 20), *slay living* (DC 20), *spell resistance*
4th (6/day)—*air walk*, *freedom of movement*, *poison* (DC 19), *tongues*
3rd (7/day)—*bestow curse* (DC 18), *cure serious wounds*, *dispel magic*, *searing light*, *speak with dead*
2nd (7/day)—*bull's strength*, *cure moderate wounds*, *hold person* (DC 17), *resist energy*, *silence* (DC 17), *spiritual weapon*
1st (8/day)—*command* (DC 16), *cure light wounds*, *divine favor*, *obscuring mist*, *sanctuary*, *shield of faith*
0 (6/day)—*create water*, *cure minor wounds*, *detect magic*, *detect poison*, *guidance*, *light*, *mending*, *purify food and drink*, *read magic*

Abilities Str 21, Dex 10, Con —, Int 8, Wis 21, Cha 20
Feats Combat Casting, Extend Spell, Iron Will, Persuasive, Skill Focus (bluff), Weapon Focus (dagger)
Skills Bluff +16, Concentration +13, Diplomacy +9, Intimidate +9, Sense Motive +17, Spellcraft +12
Possessions *+2 banded mail, +1 heavy steel shield, periapt of Wisdom +2, cloak of resistance +2*

Despair (Su) At the mere sight of Vestrilar, the viewer must make a DC 20 Will save or be paralyzed with fear for 1d4 rounds. Whether or not the save is successful, that target cannot be affected again by Vestrilar's despair ability for 24 hours.
Mummy Rot (Su) Supernatural disease—slam, Fortitude DC 20, incubation period 1 minute; damage 1d6 Con and 1d6 Cha. See *Monster Manual* page 190 for more information.
Vulnerable to Sonic (Ex) Due to the nature of his mummifcation, Vestrilar does not possess the standard vulnerability to fire most mummified creatures possess. Rather, his lacquered flesh takes half again as much (+50%) damage as normal from sonic attacks.

Tactics: Vestrilar's reaction to the PCs entering his crypt is not an immediate attack. He rises from his bier and attempts to address them in Muranni. If this doesn't work, he tries Draconic. If neither of these languages work, he casts *tongues* and hopes his actions aren't misinterpreted as an attack.

If he establishes communication with the PCs, Vestrilar explains his situation to them. He avoids mentioning his allegiance to Balim and tries to appear sympathetic. His theories are correct. If the PCs can *plane shift* him to the Negative Energy Plane, inflict at least 100 points of negative energy damage or 10 negative levels on him, or successfully cast *break enchantment* against a caster level 20th effect, they remove the curse on the mummy and he may leave this chamber. He does so immediately and begins searching for an exit from the temple. He may be encountered at a later point in this adventure in this case, or he may find his escape.

If the PCs attack, Vestrilar holds nothing back. He tries to capture any spellcasters

alive, but turns his rage at being imprisoned for so long upon all other targets. If he's victorious, he tries to force captured spellcasters into aiding him, after which he kills them for their trouble.

Development: Although he's cursed, Vestrilar is also evil. If he escapes into the Material Plane, it's not long before he begins to establish himself as a major villain in the region. The PCs may be shocked or dismayed to find out that the cursed priest they rescued was in fact a terrible menace, and may be called upon to stand against him.

21. CHAMBER OF THE SUN (EL 13)

The doors to this chamber are missing. A cool, moist breeze flows through the chamber, issuing from a great hole in the bronze dome that rises a hundred feet overhead. The occasional flash of lightning provides sparkling illumination as it is reflected through a series of mirrors set around the dome and redirected to shine on the room's center. The locus of this light is a twenty-foot-tall, two-step ziggurat. Spaced around the first tier are eight elaborate sarcophagi that glitter with gold. At the ziggurat's summit sits an even larger sarcophagus that gleams in the intermittent beams of light.

While the ordinary members of the Shensite Order were interred in the crypts, the Grand Mystics of the order were brought to this special chamber for burial. The centermost sarcophagus holds the body of the Grand Mystic who led the order from Mur to its new home in the Yatils. Here the light of the sun and moons would constantly be focused by an ingenious system of mirrors on the resting place of these illustrious persons. All but the top sarcophagus have been opened. Two are completely empty, never having been occupied. The other six hold only the barest bits of bone and shreds of cloth. The displacer beasts that occupy this room licked the lacquer from the corpses like giant candies before consuming the bodies.

The topmost sarcophagus is locked and inviolate, and contains a fair amount of treasure.

Sarcophagus: Hardness 8; hp 50; Open Lock DC 30; Break DC 28.

Creatures: The displacer beasts that survived the flight from the Garden centuries ago took up residence in the west wing, with this chamber as their primary lair. The pack lord lives on the top tier. Below him, two more displacer beasts rest on the lower tier and the last three prowl the floor of the room. Those on the floor immediately attack any intruders and follow them if they flee. The remaining displacer beasts wait for attackers to mount the 10-foot-high tier while attacking with their tentacles.

Displacer Beasts (5): hp 51 each; *Monster Manual* 66.

Displacer Beast Pack Lord: hp 203; *Monster Manual* 66.

Trap: The dome's eight windows are open and look out upon the roof. Gutters prevent runoff from entering the room below. If any living creature attempts to pass through one of the windows, it is subjected to a *greater glyph of warding*. These glyphs automatically reset in one round.

***Greater Glyph of Warding* (Blast) Trap**: CR 7; spell trigger; automatic reset (1 round delay); spell effect (*greater glyph of warding* [blast], 16th-level cleric, 8d8 sonic); DC 19 Reflex save halves; multiple targets (all targets within 5 ft.); Search DC 31; Disable Device DC 31.

Treasure: The lid of the top sarcophagus is set with a large diamond worth 1,000 gp. Within the sarcophagus lies the lacquered six-armed body of the Grand Mystic, along with his worldly possessions. These treasures include a +2 *breastplate*, a *horn of fog*, a masterwork cold iron scimitar set with rubies worth a total of 2,600 gp, a masterwork light steel shield, and an assortment of gold and jade jewelry worth a total of 850 gp. At its feet lies a *lyre of building*.

22. TRAPPED PORTAL (EL 7)

Trap: These short stairways rise to locked and trapped doors. Any attempt to open one of these doors causes burnt othur fumes to spew out around the door's frame.

Burnt Othur Fume Trap: CR 7; mechanical; touch trigger; repair reset; gas; multiple targets (all targets at the top of the stairs); never miss; onset delay (3 rounds); poison (burnt othur fumes, Fortitude save DC 18 to resist, 1 Con drain/3d6 Con); Search DC 21; Disable Device DC 21.

23. SUSUSSAN'S SHRINE (EL 11)

The sound of roaring water fills this room, and a fine spray of mist hangs in the air. The entire west wall is actually the side of the mountain, with the chamber's walls built off of it. Down this rugged slope falls a turbulent waterfall that empties into a rock-lined pool at the base. Lichens and moss grow upon the craggy face. At the very top fifty feet above is a glint of metal. A bronze, tiered dome rises to an open apex ninety feet above the pool.

This room serves as a shrine to Susussan of the sky, a prominent obah of the temple and one of the greatest allies to Shensi. Channels cut into the mountain face outside direct runoff through the back wall of the chamber, forming the waterfall. The pool at the base is 20 feet deep and has a drain that allows the water to flow out to area 1 from beneath the temple. The slope of the mountain is wet and slippery, requiring a DC 20 Climb check to scale. Anyone reaching the top finds the Treasure.

Creature: Unfortunately for would-be treasure hunters, this chamber is far from unguarded. Susussan commands the respect of all the creatures of the sky, and is held to be the most powerful of the obahs by many sects (the Shensites of course believed Shensi to be more powerful, but saw Susussan as a close second). As such, this room is guarded by a powerful spirit of the air. This creature resembles a large winged monkey with a long tail and a tusked face. It wields a large mace in its prehensile tail. If intruders flee with the treasure it pursues them to the ends of the earth to reclaim its prize. Otherwise, it does not bother to chase down intruders who flee from this chamber.

Spirit of the Air **CR 11**

N Large magical beast (air)
Fiend Folio 160
Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +14, Spot +14
Languages Auran, Draconic, Giant

AC 26, touch 14, flat-footed 21
hp 93 (11 HD); **DR** 10/magic
Immune air effects
SR 23
Fort +10, **Ref** +12, **Will** +6

Spd 30 ft., climb 40 ft., fly 60 ft. (average)
Melee +1 heavy mace +15/+10/+5 (1d8+5) and bite +12 (1d6+2) and wing buffet +12 (1d4+2)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Base Atk +11; **Grp** +19
Atk Options Combat Expertise, Improved Trip
Special Atk whirlwind

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 7th, ranged touch +16)
4th—*freedom of movement, summon monster IV*
3rd—*dispel magic, cure serious wounds, invisibility purge, protection from elements*
2nd—*aid, animal messenger, cure moderate wounds, enthrall, wind wall*
1st—*command* (DC 14), *comprehend languages, divine favor, entropic shield, summon monster I*
0—*create water, cure minor wounds, guidance, light, resistance*
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th)
At will—*call lightning* (DC 16), *control winds, detect magic*
1/day—*confusion* (DC 17), *control weather, whirlwind, wind walk*

Abilities Str 19, Dex 20, Con 17, Int 14, Wis 17, Cha 16
SQ air mastery
Feats Combat Expertise, Hover, Improved Trip, Multiattack
Skills Climb +12, Concentration +14, Hide +13, Listen +14, Search +13, Spot +14
Possessions +1 *heavy mace*

Air Mastery (Ex) A spirit of the air gains a +1 bonus on its attack and damage rolls if its opponent is airborne.

Whirlwind (Su) A spirit of the air can transform itself into a whirlwind once per day and remain in that form for up to 10 rounds. In this form, it can move through the air or along a surface at its fly speed. The whirlwind is 5 feet wide at its base, 20 feet wide at the top, and anywhere between 10 and 30 feet tall (the spirit of the air can change the height as a standard action).

A Medium or smaller creature in contact with this whirlwind must make a DC 20 Reflex save or take 2d6 points of damage. It must also make a second DC 20 Reflex save or be picked up and held suspended in the powerful winds, taking 2d6 points of damage each round. A creature that can fly is allowed a Reflex save each round to escape the whirlwind, in which case the creature still takes damage for that round but can leave (if the save is successful).

A spirit of the air can eject any carried creatures whenever it wishes, depositing them wherever the whirlwind happens to be. If the whirlwind's base touches

the ground, it creates a swirling cloud of debris. This cloud is centered on the spirit of the air and has a diameter equal to half the whirlwind's height. The cloud obscures vision (including darkvision) beyond 5 feet. Creatures 5 feet away have concealment, while those farther away have total concealment. Those caught in the cloud must make a DC 20 Concentration check to cast a spell.

Treasure: Resting at the summit is a brass reliquary. The lid is sealed with a band of beaten lead, forcing a DC 18 Strength check to open it. Within is some dust and a few bone fragments—the remains of the original founder of the Shensite Order. Lying with the remains is a fat platinum scroll tube. The tube itself is worth 500 gp. Within the tube is a scroll containing a *miracle* spell.

24. ROOF ACCESS (EL 6)

Rain pours through an opening at the top of the bronze dome seventy-five feet overhead. Bas-reliefs depicting a verdant, mountainous jungle realm cover the walls and interior of the dome. Fantastical images of hanging palaces and majestic, cloud-wrapped peaks mingle with images of multi-armed men and animals. A dark form lies motionless in a puddle on the floor beneath the skylight above.

This room's original purpose has been lost to time, but since the takeover of the Storm Riders it has served as the entrance from the roof for the displacer beasts that inhabit the west wing of the temple. The dark form on the floor is a dead displacer beast that fell while trying to climb the rain-slick walls. Climbing to the roof requires a DC 20 Climb check. The doors to area **25** have been locked and boarded from the other side, requiring a DC 30 Strength check to open them.

Creatures: Two displacer beasts pace in the northern portion of this room, awaiting their pack mates who were able to make the climb out through the roof to hunt. They failed their initial checks and declined to try again after one of their number suffered a fatal fall from high above.

Displacer Beasts (2): hp 51 each; *Monster Manual* 66.

25. RIDER BARRACKS

This room is in shambles, but has obviously been used recently by a great number of occupants. It seems that every scrap of wood in the temple has been rounded up and cobbled together into crude beds, tables, and chairs. Stained furs, carpets, and various pieces of cloth serve as mattresses or are otherwise strewn about the room. Several bronze braziers make the room uncomfortably warm. The debris of broken equipment, articles of clothing, spilled wine jugs, the remains of meals, and items of garbage are scattered everywhere. The rancid stench of sweat and sour wine fills the room.

The Storm Riders have converted this room into their barracks. There are crude beds and pallets for twenty-eight men in all. The doors to the west are locked and have been boarded shut, requiring a DC 30 Strength check to open them. The riders did this to prevent the displacer beasts from gaining entrance to their barracks.

Treasure: An easy search of the room turns up assorted coinage and semi-precious stones totaling 250 gp in value.

26. ARMORY

The walls of this room are lined with wooden racks. Many of them are empty but a number of weapons and items of armor and equipment remain. Trestle tables occupy the center of the room, with benches along either side.

The Storm Riders use this room as their armory and mess hall. Items of mundane equipment and arms that are taken in their raids are also stored here. Any common melee or ranged weapon can be found here, as can any type of armor or shield except full plate and tower shields. The majority of the weapons and armor are exotic in appearance, with exotic motifs, serrated edges, and decorative holes. All of the equipment is mundane and non-masterwork; the Storm Riders have already claimed the good stuff.

27. CLIMBING PLAZA (EL 10)

A narrow mountain valley separates the main portion of the temple from a tall citadel higher up the mountain face. The floor of this plaza climbs in a series of terraces to a bronze door at the base of the citadel. High overhead, a pair of narrow, soaring aqueducts runs from the citadel's bronze domes to the highest dome on the lower temple. A pair of alcoves flanks the citadel entrance. In the eastern alcove a tall, four-armed statue frowns down upon the plaza. The western alcove is empty. A shrill piping fills the courtyard with an alien melody.

This plaza is where the final conflict between Ataman Histchok and the Grand Mystic of the Temple played out so long ago. The aqueducts above are actually sluices channeling the mountain's runoff from the roof of the citadel onto the roof of the lower temple. They run 60 feet above the plaza. The piping noise issues from numerous clay flutes built into the forward edge of the citadel roof. The erratic winds of the storm create the chaotic melody.

Creatures: There are four will-o'-wisps lurking in this area today, although only three are encountered here if one was previously slain on the roof. They hover above the roof of the lower temple and lend their own buzzing voices to the piping to try to induce disquiet in the party. They swoop in and attack from behind but retreat if one is killed. They then try to tail the party and feed off of their suffering while they battle other opponents, flying in occasionally to snipe at the characters.

Will-O'-Wisps (4): hp 40 each; *Monster Manual* 255.

28. CAPTAINS' QUARTERS

Water pours through an opening in the roof sixty feet above, forming a shallow pool of water in the northern portion of the room. The southern portion is elevated fifteen feet and appears to be relatively dry.

Furs and tapestries hang on the walls in this area, which is lit by the glow of a brazier. Two beds sit against the southern wall, along with some stools, cushions, and a pair of chests.

This chamber serves as the quarters of Hetman Abidjor and Variag the Mighty, Ataman Histchok's captains—both scorned barbarians are out on raids now (although the PCs may have already encountered and defeated Variag). They live on the raised section where there are two beds laden with quality furs and silken cushions. Between the beds is a folding camp table with two stools and a stone brazier. Large chests lie at the foot of the beds.

Treasure: All of the valuables and furnishings are plunder from previous raids. The tapestries, furs, and cushions are worth a total of 500 gp. The camp table is made of mahogany and is cunningly constructed. It is worth 75 gp. The chests are not locked and contain various personal effects as well as spare equipment. One of the chests has a false bottom that a DC 20 Search can locate. Within this compartment are some treasures Abidjor has been holding out from Histchok—350 gp, 80 pp, three chrysoberyls worth 100 gp each, and a silver chain with a diamond pendant worth 1,250 gp.

29. INNER SANCTUM (EL 9)

The door to this chamber is locked; only Ataman Histchok has a key.

Rain soaks the sunken floor of this chamber from an opening in the roof overhead. The room descends in ten-foot tiers, while a narrow stair connects each of the levels. At the bottom level stands a huge gold statue of the same dragonlike creature seen on the roof of this temple. Arranged at its base are a dozen small beds, each separated by a table heaped with delicious-looking food, tantalizing candies, and all manner of toys.

This chamber once served as the inner sanctum of the temple. Now Ataman Histchok uses it as his nursery. His riders have spent the last month of their newfound freedom from Iggwilv's wards abducting any children they could find in their raids. The children are brought here, where Histchok hopes to eventually train them as a new generation of Storm Riders not bound by the curse. With the uninhibited travel available to these riders, he hopes to finally find a way to break the curse. The ten children are all between the ages of 10 and 14 (young enough still to learn new ways, yet old enough to have a certain level of self-sufficiency), and were selected by the raiders for their strength and independence. Histchok has treated them quite hospitably since he views them as his future. They're well-fed, warm, and have full run of this chamber, but none of these comforts has eased their fears.

Creatures: On one of his forays into the temple, Histchok rescued a wounded kamadan from a pack of displacer beasts. When Histchok saved it, the kamadan agreed to serve Histchok as a guardian. Histchok recently placed it in charge of defending the children here from any displacer beasts that come prowling for food, and also to ensure that none of the children escape. In the time it's spent here, the kamadan has actually grown quite fond of the human children, and they've come to view it as their one protector in the temple, a view that was only furthered when the kamadan recently fought and killed a displacer beast that found its way into this chamber from the hole in the roof above. They've named him Rattle.

Rattle's fondness for the children has left him confused. While not overly intelligent, he's smart enough to have figured out that Histchok doesn't necessarily have the children's' best interests at heart. Yet he has no idea of what to do about the situation. He may prove to be one of the PCs' greatest allies in the temple as a result.

Rattle, Kamadan: hp 76; see Appendix.

Frightened Children, human warrior 1: hp 3 each.

Tactics: Rattle stands ferociously between the children and any perceived threat, growling menacingly as the kids clutch to his flanks in fear. He won't initiate any attacks, but as soon as he thinks one of the PCs might hurt his kids, he fights with a tremendous fury and to the death. If he's slain, the children become distraught, viewing the PCs as their enemy. This is a delicate situation—one that combat can't hope to solve.

Fortunately, even if the PCs can't use magic to speak to Rattle, he's picked up a few words and phrases in Common from the children. If the PCs work at it, they can establish some form of base communication with the kamadan. Between this and questioning the children, it should be possible to piece together what's happened. If the PCs can convince the children of their good intentions (by adjusting their attitudes from indifferent to helpful), they can convince Rattle to come with them. The kamadan won't leave the kids' presence until they exit the temple.

30. BELFRY

The door to this chamber is kept locked; Ataman Histchok carries the only key.

This small chamber extends far into darkness above. High windows are dimly visible, through which flashes of lightning and the occasional droplet of rain find their way in. The bottom of this shaft-like chamber is packed with boxes, crates, and bags. The foul stink of decay fills the small room.

This was once the citadel's belfry, and the bronze dome above rises to a total height of 90 feet where a huge iron bell still hangs. The pull rope broke long ago, and Histchok now uses this room to store the booty from his centuries of raids upon Perrenland.

Treasure: Most of the treasures here consist of trade goods and household items from raided caravans and freeholds. The total goods are worth 6,800 gp, but they weigh just over 2 tons. There are four metal chests mixed in with the goods. These have broken locks and hold a total of 4,500 gp, 9,070 sp, 12,000 cp, 400 pp, various gems totaling 6,500 gp, a masterwork harp with silver filigree worth 200 gp, 20 +1 *shocking burst crossbow bolts*, a matched pair of masterwork kukris, a *potion of*

remove curse, a *potion of shield of faith +3*, and a *periapt of Wisdom +2*.

31. TEMPLE TREASURY (EL 11)

The door handle to this room has been broken off, and the inner workings have been smashed, preventing it from being locked.

This brightly lit room rises two hundred feet in a dome. The center of the roof glows like a tiny sun. The southern wall rises to a forty-foot-high platform. At the base of the platform are seven ceramic amphorae of intricate design.

This chamber is the temple's treasury, still inviolate after all these years. Histchok and his riders initially broke through the door, but when they encountered the guardian within and lost three of their number in short order they retreated from the room. The dome is illuminated by a dozen closely-grouped permanent *daylight* spells.

Creature: When the Shensites relocated to the Yatils and constructed their new temple, Shensi the Serpent blessed them by providing them with a powerful shensahti to guard the sacred treasury. This creature lives atop the platform and faithfully guards against all intrusion into this room by anyone other than a Shensite Grand Mystic. It does not pursue beyond the room and cannot be lured out unless one of the amphorae is removed from the room. It fights to the death to prevent the theft of its charges.

Shensahti: hp 147; see Appendix.

Treasure: The seven amphorae themselves are worth 150 gp each. The contents of the amphorae are as follows: 12,200 gp, 10,800 sp, several clay plates bearing tracts sacred to the Shensites worth 2,500 gp to a collector of antiquities, a massive emerald carved in the shape of an elaborate mountain temple worth 4,500 gp, several carved walking sticks bundled with a *staff of charming* with 14 charges, a divine scroll of *searing light*, *resurrection*, and *mass cure critical wounds* (caster level 16th), and a gold box worth 250 gp containing a *hand of glory*.

THE STORM PASSES

At some point during this adventure after the party has explored some of the temple, the storm passes. When this happens, the temple immediately shifts back into the Astral Plane and becomes encased in what appears to be a gray, impenetrable field of force. The entire temple, as well as the roof, remains accessible, but it is as if reality ends a few feet above the highest bronze dome and just beyond the doors. There is no escape from the temple at this time short of effects like *plane shift*. Gravity remains unchanged within the temple—those within are limited to their normal modes of movement and do not move as if they were actually on the Astral Plane.

An excellent time for this event to occur is after the party emerges, with freed captives in tow, from the citadel into area 27, only to find that the rain has vanished and the sky replaced by a gray expanse of strange, diffuse light. A DC 20 Knowledge (the planes) check is enough to determine what happened and where the PCs now are. Alternately, certain creatures in the temple could tell the PCs what has happened, and that if no new storm rises in the Material Plane soon, they can expect to spend many months here.

Complicating matters once this occurs is the fact that the surviving Storm Riders are whisked from their raids on the Material Plane, returning to the temple where they were initially

Shensahti

located so long ago when the Grand Mystic cursed them all, their bags full of treasure and their hearts full of cruel stories of their recent raids. These scorned raiders appear in the following locations and react as detailed:

- The scorned barbarians Abidjor and Variag, captains of the Storm Riders, appear in area **27** along with six of the Storm Riders where they had confronted the Grand Mystic and battled his golem. It's possible that Variag was slain already by the PCs, in which case he doesn't appear here. The scorned barbarians dismount and head for area **28**, while the remaining riders lead the eight scorned horses to the stable (area **15**) before retiring to area **25**.
- Seven Storm Riders appear in area **26**; they are not mounted. They return to area **25**.
- The remaining 15 Storm Riders appear in area **25**, where they remain there until an alarm is raised. If the PCs have already killed some of these scorned fighters earlier in the adventure, subtract that number from this amount.
- The obah-scorned horses of the Storm Riders also appear in the temple where they had been left when the curse fell. Twelve of the mounts appear in area **15**. The surviving four horses appear in area **3**, where they patiently await the arrival of a Storm Rider to open the secret door and lead them back to their stables. Reduce this number by the amount of scorned horses the PCs may have already slain.

If they find no reason to become alarmed (meaning they do not appear in rooms the PCs have obviously ransacked or, worse, in rooms where the PCs are visible), the Storm Riders spend several hours sorting and investigating their loot in area **25** before bundling it and bringing it to area **27** to be handed over to Ataman Histchok.

Once the Storm Riders realize the PCs are trapped in the temple with them, they quickly raise an alarm and form small groups. There are 28 scorned fighters and 2 scorned barbarians in the temple, less any the PCs have killed at the start of the adventure. The scorned fighters form groups of four; each such group is an EL 9 encounter. A scorned barbarian leads one or two of these groups; a barbarian-led group is an EL 11 encounter. The Storm Riders do not cease searching the temple for the intruders once the alarm is raised unless a new storm returns the temple to the Material Plane, in which case they immediately abandon the search and move to area **15**, where they mount up and exit the temple in raiding groups.

When the alarm is raised, there's a 15% chance each time the PCs enter a new encounter area of meeting a group of scorned fighters. If the PCs elect to hole up in a room, there's a cumulative 5% chance per hour that a group enters the room. The Storm Riders are aware of the temple's other dangers, and know how best to handle the denizens of these areas. Some rooms they avoid altogether unless they learn that the PCs have defeated the perils therein. These include areas **14**, **19**, **20**, **23**, and **31**. Areas known to be hostile (the Garden, the Twisting Corridor, and the Chamber of the Sun) are still investigated, although the Storm Riders do what they can to search these areas for the PCs without enraging the denizens.

This section of the adventure changes the tone from one of exploration to survival; the PCs can either go on the offensive and stalk the Storm Riders, attempting to pick off the smaller groups one by one, or they can go on the defensive and try to wait them out by hiding in an area the Storm Riders may think is still dangerous. In the latter case, drag out the temple's stay on the Astral Plane. The PCs don't grow hungry or thirsty here, but they may grow bored enough with hiding to make some mistakes.

The length of the temple's stay on the Astral Plane is variable. Feel free to have it last as long as you wish, although it shouldn't go for much longer than a week at the most. The Temple of Celestial Winds is a large place, but it's not quite big enough to serve as an arena for the remainder of your campaign!

Scorned Fighters (7 groups of 4): hp 47 each; see Appendix.

Scorned Barbarians (2): hp 85 each; see Appendix.

ATAMAN HISTCHOK (EL 14)

One may wonder where Ataman Histchok, the leader of these cursed raiders, is during all this. The truth of the matter is that Ataman Histchok has become a pariah due to his condition. He still controls the Storm Riders, but they rarely see him. He spends his time morosely wandering the halls and roofs of the temple. All creatures in the temple fear him and give him wide berth rather than face his wrath. His transformed condition likewise gives him passage by the golems and commands the respect (if not service) of the girallons.

Introduce Ataman Histchok whenever you see fit after the party has been trapped by the passing of the storm. Eventually he confronts them in an area where he can corner them. He fights fiercely but fatalistically. He does not fear death, and in fact has grown weary of his cursed existence.

As a result of the Grand Mystic's curse, the 3,000 obahs of the temple warped the dimensional reality of the temple. However, Shensi the Serpent took a personal interest as the curse befell Ataman Histchok. The obah saw to it that the ataman's body was torturously twisted, allowing him to retain just enough humanity to be able to grasp the full horror of its new existence. For all practical purposes Histchok is now a yuan-ti halfblood, but he is not truly a member of the race. Rather, he simply shares the physical characteristics of a halfblood. He is unable to assume an alternate form, and also carries the scorned template.

Histchok's torso is a garish mix of patches of doughy flesh and dry scales. He has two left arms, both consisting of a snake's head and body. His right arm is still human. His legs are an uncomfortable combination of snake and flesh, with his right leg ending in a clubbed, snakelike foot that causes a pronounced limp as it drags across the ground. His face is snakelike, with hollow, pain-filled eyes beneath a partially scaled brow. Surprisingly, for all his deformities he is able to climb extremely well, and he spends much time on the roofs of the temple.

Ataman Histchok **CR 14**

Male scorned yuan-ti halfblood fighter 9

CE Medium monstrous humanoid

Monster Manual 164

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., scent; Listen +13, Spot +13

Languages Common, Draconic, Dwarven, Elven, Giant,

AC 25, touch 14, flat-footed 23; Dodge, Mobility

hp 161 (16 HD)

SR 16

Fort +13, **Ref** +10, **Will** +11

Spd 20 ft.

Melee +1 *wounding battleaxe* +26/+21/+16/+11 (1d8+11/19–20/×3 plus 1 Con) and 3 bites +19 (1d4+4 plus poison)

Base Atk +16; **Grp** +24

Atk Options scorned touch 1/day

Special Atk *produce acid*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 8th)

3/day—*animal trance* (DC 15), *cause fear* (DC 14), *entangle* (DC 14)

1/day—*deeper darkness*, *neutralize poison*, *suggestion* (DC 16)

Abilities Str 27, Dex 14, Con 20, Int 18, Wis 12, Cha 16

SQ ageless, *chameleon power*, *detect poison*

Feats Alertness, Dodge, Blind-Fight, Improved Critical (battleaxe), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Mobility, Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge, Stealthy, Weapon Focus (battleaxe), Weapon Specialization (battleaxe)

Skills Climb +26, Concentration +15, Intimidate +12, Jump +11, Knowledge (nobility & royalty) +14, Knowledge (religion) +14, Hide +14 (+24 when using *chameleon power*), Listen +13, Move Silently +4, Ride +11, Spot +13, Swim +17

Possessions +2 *studded leather armor*, +1 *wounding battleaxe*, masterwork dagger, *belt of giant strength +4*, *amulet of health +2*, *ring of protection +2*, keys to areas **29** and **30**

Ageless (Su) Histchok no longer ages, and is immune to magical aging. He no longer has a maximum age, and does not die of old age. He does not drink or eat; indeed, the physical act of doing either results in intense pain, causing him to become shaken for one hour afterward. Histchok cannot gain benefits from eating or drinking magical food or potions.

***Chameleon Power* (Sp)** Histchok can psionically change his coloration to match his surroundings to gain a +10 circumstance bonus on Hide checks.

***Detect Poison* (Sp)** Histchok has the psionic ability to *detect poison* as the spell (caster level 6th).

Poison (Ex) Injury, Fortitude DC 18, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Scorned Touch (Su) Once per day, Histchok can disrupt a living target's connection to the natural world. He activates this ability as a free action, and the next time he strikes a creature with a melee attack, that creature takes 1d4 points of Constitution damage in addition to any other damage caused by the attack. Constructs, elementals, outsiders, and undead cannot be harmed by this ability.

***Produce Acid* (Sp)** Histchok has the psionic power to exude acid from his body, dealing 3d6 points of acid damage to the next creature he touches, including a creature hit by his bite attack. If he is grappling or pinning a foe when he uses this power, his grasp deals 5d6 points of acid damage. The acid becomes inert when it leaves his body, and he is immune to its effects.

Histchok

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

With the death of Ataman Histchok, the Grand Mystic's curse over the Temple of Celestial Winds is lifted. It returns to its place on the Material Plane in the midst of a sunny, dry day, and the remaining scorned riders suddenly age hundreds of years in the span of a heartbeat, crumbling away to dust.

In addition to any rewards the PCs may have already been promised, the families of the missing children raise a 5,000 gp reward for the return of their children; this award reaches the PCs one month after this adventure ends. If Rattle still lives, he realizes he cannot go with the children back to their homes. After a tearful parting, the kamadan decides to seek out a lair elsewhere in the mountains. If the PCs treated him well, he may remain with them, and could eventually become a cohort.

APPENDIX: CREATURES OF MUR

The near-mythical Land of Mur, also known as the Verdured Heights, is in fact a real (if distant) neighbor of the Flanaess. The unusual topography of this realm, in addition to a strange underlying magical effect tied to the powerful obah spirits that suffuse the land, led to the development of an ecosystem unique to these jungle-shrouded cliffs. Some of the denizens of this distant land (like girallons, chokers, and displacer beasts) have become well established in the Flanaess after ancient travelers introduced these dangerous predators to this land. Others remain quite rare on this side of the sea, but given time they may grow in number.

KAMADAN

This creature vaguely resembles a great leopard with yellowish fur and teal spots, yet even casual inspection reveals its magical nature. A swarm of six hissing snakes writhe from its shoulders, and its long, sleek tail ends in a scaly protrusion like that of a rattlesnake.

KAMADAN **CR 8**

Always N Large magical beast

Init 3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; Listen +6, Spot +7

Languages Muranni

AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 16 (–1 size, +3 Dex, +7 natural)

hp 76 (7 HD)

Fort +10, **Ref** +9, **Will** +3

Spd 40 ft.

Melee bite +12 (1d8+5) and 6 bites +10 (1d4+2 plus poison) and 2 claws +10 (1d6+2)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +17

Attack Options snakebite

Special Actions breath weapon

Abilities Str 20, Dex 17, Con 18, Int 5, Wis 12, Cha 8

SQ all-around vision

Feats Alertness, Multiattack, Stealthy

Skills Hide +9 (+13 in undergrowth), Listen +6, Move Silently +13, Search +1, Spot +7

Environment temperate hills and mountains

Organization solitary, pair, or pride (4–10)

Treasure 1/10 coins; 50% goods; 50% items

Advancement 8–16 HD (Large), 17–21 HD (Huge)

Level Adjustment +3 (cohort)

All-Around Vision (Ex) A kamadan's multiple snake heads have especially keen vision, and grant the creature a +4 racial bonus on Spot and Search checks. A kamadan cannot be flanked.

Breath Weapon (Su) 30-foot cone, once every 1d4 rounds (but no more than five times per day), sleep 1d6+4 rounds, Fortitude DC 18 negates. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Poison (Ex) Injury, Fortitude DC 18, initial damage 1d2 Strength, secondary damage 1d6 Strength. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Snakebite (Ex) Each of a kamadan's six snake heads possesses a separate brain. This allows the kamadan to make attacks with its snake bites as a free action.

Skills A kamadan has a +4 racial bonus on Hide and Move Silently checks. In areas of heavy undergrowth, the Hide bonus increases to +8.

The kamadan is native to the mountainous jungles of Mur, far to the west of the Flanaess. Although a distant relative of the displacer beast, kamadans despise these creatures and attack them on sight, often laying complex traps for them and relying upon their scent ability to see through the displacement effect. Against larger opponents or larger numbers of foes, the kamadan relies heavily on its breath weapon and mobility.

OBAH-BLESSED CREATURE

Creatures born or created in the land of Mur with multiple useable arms are considered to be blessed by the incarnate spirits of nature called the 3,000 obahs. These blessed individuals have heightened abilities as a result of their supernatural birthright and often have positions of favor in their societies.

OBAH-BLESSED ADVANCED CHOKER **CR 4**

CE Small aberration

Monster Manual 34

Init +8; **Senses** Listen +1, Spot +1

Languages Muranni

AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 15

hp 39 (6 HD)

Fort +4, **Ref** +8, **Will** +8

Spd 20 ft., climb 10 ft.

Melee 4 tentacles +9 (1d3+4)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Base Atk +4; **Grp** +12

Atk Options improved grab (tentacle), constrict 1d3+4

Abilities Str 18, Dex 18, Con 15, Int 4, Wis 13, Cha 11

SQ quickness

Feats Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Multiweapon Fighting, Stealthy

Skills Climb +15, Hide +13, Move Silently +9

OBAH-BLESSED CLAY GOLEM **CR 12**

N Large construct

Monster Manual 134

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +0, Spot +0

AC 25, touch 10, flat-footed 22

hp 90 (11 HD); **DR** 10/adamantine and bludgeoning

Immune magic, construct traits

Fort +3, **Ref** +5, **Will** +3

Spd 20 ft.
Melee 6 slams +16 (2d10+9 plus cursed wound)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Base Atk +8; **Grp** +29
Special Actions berserk

Abilities Str 29, Dex 15, Con —, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 7

CREATING AN OBAH-BLESSED CREATURE

"Obah-blessed" is an inherited template that can be added to any creature with no more than four arms. An obah-blessed creature has all of the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Grapple Check: An obah-blessed creature with two extra arms gains a +4 racial bonus on grapple checks. An obah-blessed creature with four extra arms gains a +8 racial bonus on grapple checks.

Full Attack: If the base creature has claw, tentacle, or slam attacks, it gains an additional number of natural attacks equal to the number of arms it's gained. If the base creature can wield weapons, it may wield weapons in its new arms as off-hand weapons.

Abilities: For obah-blessed creatures with two extra arms, increase from the base creature as follows: Str +2, Dex +4, Con +2, Cha +4. For those with four extra arms, increase from the base creature as follows: Str +4, Dex +6, Con +4, Cha +6.

Feats: An obah-blessed creature gains Multiweapon Fighting as a bonus feat if it uses weapons.

Challenge Rating: Two additional arms: same as base creature +1. Four additional arms: same as base creature +2.

Level Adjustment: Two additional arms: same as base creature +2. Four additional arms: same as base creature +3.

SCORNED CREATURE

A creature that mortally offends the obahs finds that nature itself turns its back on him. This scorned creature transforms into a twisted parody of itself. Scorned creatures live eternal lives in constant pain, yet few seek suicide as an answer to their Hell on Earth predicament, as most realize that what likely awaits them in the afterlife is much worse. As a result, scorned creatures fight tenaciously to avoid death.

The flesh of a scorned creature darkens and takes on a charred cast. Nails and teeth crack and blacken, becoming jagged and brittle. Hair either coarsens into bristles or falls out altogether, and an odor of burnt meat continually surrounds them.

SCORNED FIGHTER **CR 5**
Human fighter 5
NE Medium humanoid
Init +0; **Senses** Listen –1, Spot –1
Languages Common

AC 18, touch 10, flat-footed 18
hp 47 (5 HD)
Resist fire 10
Fort +8, **Ref** +1, **Will** +0

Spd 10 ft.
Melee +1 scimitar +10 (1d6+6/18–20) or mwk lance +9 (1d8+4/×3)
Ranged mwk composite shortbow +6 (1d6+3/×3)
Base Atk +5; **Grp** +8
Atk Options Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge
Special Atk scorned touch 1/day

Abilities Str 16, Dex 11, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 6
SQ ageless
Feats Mounted Archery, Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack, Spirited Charge, Weapon Focus (scimitar), Weapon Specialization (scimitar)

Obah-Blessed and Scorned Creatures

Skills Handle Animal +6, Intimidate +6, Ride +10
Possessions *+1 scale mail*, buckler, *+1 scimitar*, masterwork lance, masterwork composite shortbow (+3 Str) with 20 arrows

SCORNED HORSE CR 2
Heavy warhorse
N Large animal
Monster Manual 273
Init +0; **Senses** low-light vision, scent; Listen +3, Spot +2
AC 15, touch 9, flat-footed 15
hp 34 (4 HD)
Resist fire 10
Fort +8, **Ref** +4, **Will** +0
Spd 40 ft.
Melee 2 hooves +7 melee (1d6+5) and bite +2 melee (1d4+2)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +12
Abilities Str 20, Dex 11, Con 19, Int 2, Wis 9, Cha 4
Feats Endurance, Run
Skills Listen +3, Spot +2
Possessions *horseshoes of a zephyr*

SCORNED BARBARIAN CR 9
Human barbarian 9
NE Medium humanoid
Init +0; **Senses** Listen +12, Spot +0
Languages Common
AC 17, touch 10, flat-footed 17; improved uncanny dodge
hp 85 (9 HD); **DR** 1/—
Resist fire 10
Fort +9, **Ref** +3, **Will** +3
Spd 30 ft.
Melee *+2 falchion* +14/+9 (2d4+12/18–20)
Ranged mwk composite shortbow +10 (1d6+4/×3)
Base Atk +9; **Grp** +13
Atk Options Power Attack, Ride-By Attack, Trample
Special Atk rage 3/day, scorned touch 1/day
*2-point Power Attack
Abilities Str 18, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 6
SQ ageless, trap sense +3
Feats Mounted Combat, Power Attack, Ride-By Attack, Trample, Weapon Focus (falchion)
Skills Climb +15, Handle Animal +10, Intimidate +10, Listen +12, Ride +14
Possessions *+1 mithral scale mail, +2 falchion*, masterwork composite shortbow (+4 Str) with 20 arrows
Rage When in a rage, the scorned barbarian's stats change as follows:
AC 15, touch 8, flat-footed 15
hp 103 (9 HD)
Fort +11, Will +5
Melee *+2 falchion* +16/+11 (2d4+15/18–20)
Base Atk +9; **Grp** +15
Abilities Str 22, Con 20
Skills Climb +17

Scaling the Adventure

"The Coming Storm" is designed for a party of four 10th-level characters. To adapt it to an 8th–9th or 11th–12th-level adventure, simply adjust all NPC character levels and Search and Disable Device checks for traps by a number equal to that which the average party level deviates from 10. Don't forget to modify the amount of treasure found in the adventure appropriately. Specific changes to the adventure include:

8th–9th-level characters: Remove 1–2 girallons and kamadans from these encounters, or consider having several of them suffer from starvation. Replace all clay golems with flesh golems. Make the grizzled deinonychuses normal deinonychuses, but retain one grizzled version as a pack leader for each group. Replace the ancient assassin vine in area **12A** with a 10 Hit Die version. Replace all obah-blessed chokers with standard chokers. Reduce Jiba's Hit Dice to 10 and make him Large. Remove a few wraiths from area **19**. Remove the pack lord from area **21**. Replace the spirit of the air in area **23** with a greater air elemental. Remove a will-o'-wisp from area **27**. Keep the shensahti in area **31**, but have it threaten the PCs for a few rounds before it attacks to give them a chance to flee.

11th–12th-level characters: Advance the behir, kamadan, displacer beasts and girallons each by 3–6 Hit Dice unless doing so would change their size. Advance all clay golems by 4–8 Hit Dice. Give the deinonychuses the obah-blessed template. Advance the ancient assassin vine in area **12A** by a few Hit Dice and make it Gargantuan. Give all the obah-blessed chokers 1–2 levels of rogue. Increase Jiba's and Brakalan's Hit Dice by 4–6. Add 2–4 spectres to area **19**. Add a second pack lord to area **21**. Add a second spirit of the air to area **23**. Add 2–4 will-o'wisps to area **27**. Add a second shensahti to area **31**.

CREATING A SCORNED CREATURE

"Scorned" is an acquired template that can be added to any corporeal aberration, animal, dragon, fey, giant, humanoid, magical beast, monstrous humanoid, or plant (referred to hereafter as the base creature).

Armor Class: A scorned creature's natural armor bonus increases by 2.

Speed: Movement causes a scorned creature great pain. Reduce all of a scorned creature's base speeds by 10 feet. A scorned creature's base land speed can go no lower than 5 feet. If a scorned creature's other speeds (burrow, climb, fly, or swim) drop to 0 or less, it loses that movement type completely.

Special Attacks: A scorned creature retains all the special attacks of the base creature and also gains the following special attack:

Scorned Touch (Su) Once per day, a scorned creature can disrupt a living target's connection to the natural world. The scorned creature activates its scorned touch as a free action, and the next time it strikes a creature with a melee attack, that creature takes 1d4 points of Constitution damage in addition to any other damage caused by the attack. Constructs, elementals, outsiders, and undead cannot be harmed by this ability.

Special Qualities: A scorned creature retains all the special qualities of the base creature and also gains resistance to fire 10. In addition, a scorned creature gains the following special quality.

Ageless (Su) The scorned creature no longer ages, and is immune to magical aging. He no longer has a maximum age, and does not die of old age. A scorned creature does not drink or eat; indeed, the physical act of doing either causes intense pain to the scorned creature, causing it to become shaken for one hour afterward. Scorned creatures cannot gain benefits from eating or drinking magical food or potions.

Abilities: Change from the base creature as follows: Str +2, Dex –2, Con +2, Wis –4, Cha –2.

Challenge Rating: Same as the base creature +0.

Level Adjustment: Same as the base creature +1.

SHENSAHTI

A long snakelike creature with purplish and dark gray scales hisses angrily. Its huge membranous wings lift it gracefully into the air, its four thin reptilian legs hanging below its sinuous body.

SHENSAHTI **CR 11**

Always N Huge outsider (native)

Init +12; **Senses** darkvision 120 ft., low-light vision, see invisibility; Listen +23, Spot +23

Languages Auran, Draconic, Muranni

AC 26, touch 16, flat-footed 18 (–2 size, +8 Dex, +10 natural)

hp 147 (14 HD); fast healing 5; **DR** 10/magic

Immune cold, magical aging, sleep, sonic, time-related attacks

SR 20

Fort +15, **Ref** +17, **Will** +15

Spd 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (perfect)

Melee bite +22 (3d6+10/19–20) and tail +20 (2d6+5) and 2 wings +20 (1d8+5)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Base Atk +14; **Grp** +32

Atk Options Combat Expertise, Improved Trip

Special Actions roar

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 18th)

At will—*detect thoughts* (DC 14), *see invisibility*

3/day—*greater dispel magic*

1/day—*displacement*, *stoneskin*

Abilities Str 30, Dex 27, Con 23, Int 14, Wis 22, Cha 15

SQ breathless, outside of time

Feats Combat Expertise, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Multiatatck

Skills Bluff +19, Concentration +23, Diplomacy +6, Hide +17, Knowledge (nature) +19, Knowledge (any, usually religion) +19, Listen +23, Move Silently +25, Search +19, Sense Motive +23, Spot +23

Environment temperate mountains

Organization solitary or pair

Treasure standard

Advancement 15–30 HD (Huge), 31–42 HD (Gargantuan)

Breathless (Su) A shensahti does not breathe, and can exist comfortably in an airless environment.

Outside of Time (Su) A shensahti does not age, and is immortal unless killed by pestilence or violence. It is immune to magical aging effects, *sleep* effects, and any effect that manipulates time, including *temporal stasis*. *Time stop* functions in the proximity of a shensahti when cast by another creature, since this spell's effects do not interact with the shensahti, although a shensahti cannot ever gain the effects of a *time stop* spell itself.

Roar (Su) A shensahti may focus its booming voice as a free action once every 1d4 rounds, filling a 100-foot-radius burst centered on it with thunderous sound. All creatures in this area immediately take 4d6 points of sonic damage, or half on a DC 23 Reflex save. Those who fail this save must then make a DC 23 Will save to avoid becoming confused for 1d4 rounds as the overwhelming sound echoes through their minds in an increasing cacophony of noise. The confusion effect is a mind-affecting effect. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Shensahtis are considered the blessed of Shensi the Serpent and are known to lurk around the high peaks of Mur, floating high on freezing winds where the thin air would suffocate most other creatures. Occasionally, a lone shensahti ventures down to the overgrown cliffs of that land as well to hunt or play or seek a mate.

A shensahti is about 40 feet long, with a wingspan of about 50 feet. It weighs about 2,000 pounds.

A shensahti's first two actions in combat is to fly into the air, out of melee range so it can cast *stoneskin* and then *displacement*. It then swoops down to fight from the air, using its excellent maneuverability to attack multiple foes after using its roar.

Greg would like to thank the playtesters who helped him with the development and inspiration for this adventure. Of course, he wrote and playtested "The Coming Storm" so long ago he doesn't exactly recall who those people might have been, but he assumes they were probably extremely close personal friends.

Mt.Zogon
MUSHROOM, I DECIDED NOT TO CLONE MYSELF. THE BRAIN-EATING MONSTERS IN MT. ZOGON WOULD DE-BRAIN MY CLONE-BABY THE MOMENT I TURNED MY BACK.
AND THEN THE FLESH-EATING WORMS WOULD EAT THE FLESH! AND THEN THE BONE BEETLES WOULD EAT THE BONES! SO FORGET IT!
SO, IN CONCLUSION... AS MUCH AS I DESIRE A CLONE-BABY, IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE TO CREATE ONE IN THIS ENVIRONMENT.
SO... YOU'RE SURE THIS ISN'T BECAUSE OF THE WHOLE DIAPER THING?
AEIII! YELLOW BABY-POOP!
BY TONY MOSELEY
ZOGONIA.COM

Gates of Oblivion

BY ALEC AUSTIN
BY ANDREW HOU
BY ROBERT LAZZARETTI

ANY SETTING, HIGH-LEVEL (13TH–20TH), PLANE OF SHADOW AND DUNGEON CRAWL

For centuries, the marching monoliths of the dread city of Lacc have consumed the light of countless worlds, transforming them into pale reflections of the city's shadow. Now, a doomsday cult has established a conduit for Lacc to enter the Material Plane. As hope fades and monoliths grind the hills to chalk, the master of Lacc prepares to devour yet another world.

"Gates of Oblivion" is a D&D adventure for four 18th-level characters. As the majority of the adventure takes place on the Plane of Shadow, make certain you're familiar with the rules on page 152 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. This adventure is designed to work within any campaign setting; simply substitute an appropriate major city for High Bastion.

Adventure Background

Eons ago, Tenaris Xin bound himself to the Plane of Shadow, trading his soul for power and immortality. At first Xin was content to research new spells and revel in the power of darkness, but over time the knowledge of what he had lost became a canker in his heart. As he brooded in Lacc, the city of monoliths, Xin decided it was intolerable that mortals should possess anything he was denied, and set out to drain all color from the universe.

Though Xin is a power to be reckoned with, he knew that he had no hope of achieving his goal alone. Thus, he founded the Cult of the Monolith, an apocalyptic sect whose missionaries traveled from world to world, converting the locals to their nihilistic creed.

In the millennia since its founding, the Cult of the Monolith spread across innumerable planes, and while most of its members are absorbed into Xin's undead horde once they've served their purpose, a handful have gained places of power in Lacc. Xin's second-in-command is Heithuras, a shadow dragon and a fanatical servant of the Cult, while his other lieutenants include Sesorya Girgul, a priestess who betrayed her world to Xin in exchange for power, and Kung, an evolved nightwalker whom Xin enslaved. Xin and his minions have orchestrated the death of world after world, but while Xin and Heithuras care only for the end of all things, Kung longs for revenge against the man who enslaved him, and Sesorya seeks to supplant Xin and use Lacc as an instrument of her own aggrandizement.

While Kung seethes with impotent anger and Sesorya seeks pawns she can use against Xin, Xin's attention is absorbed by the three gates that allow Lacc to swallow worlds. The Empty Gate, the Colorless Gate, and the Hollow Gate are the keystones of Xin's campaign for universal annihilation, but during his latest assault, a group of adventurers came perilously close to destroying the Colorless Gate. Though Xin does not know that Sesorya informed the adventurers of the gate's vulnerability, he has ordered their defenses reinforced. Sesorya is unperturbed by this move. After all, the more resistance her pawns face before they defeat Xin, the easier they will be to dispose of afterward.

Adventure Synopsis

In "Gates of Oblivion," the characters are summoned to High Bastion to investigate an unnatural darkness that has cloaked the heavens. They learn of Lacc's intrusion into their world from a hapless paladin who is fleeing members of the Cult of the Monolith. She tells them of an ever-expanding tide of shadows, over which loom immense obsidian monoliths. The PCs must enter the Plane of Shadow and locate the Empty, Hollow, and Colorless Gates. After defeating the gates' defenders, they must climb to the pinnacle of Xin's tower and slay both Xin and Sesorya Girgul. Every moment wasted allows Lacc's boundaries to expand farther, so characters must act decisively to prevent the city of High Bastion and the souls of all its citizens from being consumed by darkness.

Adventure Hooks

The circle of stones where Lacc first appears is about 40 miles from the metropolis of High Bastion, and strange omens and events have plagued the area surrounding it and the village of Nether Hogsholt for weeks before the first manifestation occurs. Billowing clouds of darkness expanded to cover the sky at noon, and shadows move independently of the objects casting them. Any number of individuals might contact the characters to investigate these strange occurrences:

- A lord who is fond of hunting deer near the village of Nether Hogsholt had his last two hunts ruined by unnatural weather and unsettling omens. He offers the party an extravagant reward if they can deal with whatever is causing the strange events before the royal court visits him in a month's time.
- The city council of High Bastion asks the party to confirm reports of strange events near Nether Hogsholt. The last group of adventurers they hired (the Bright Swords) have not returned, and as their divinations indicate that the city is in grave danger, the council asks the characters to deal with this threat as soon as possible.

The reward offered to the party for resolving their employer's difficulties should be worth around 50,000 gp in gems or magic items.

Chapter One: Gates of Shadow

Any of the city's guards can direct characters to Nether Hogsholt, and a precise description of the village or a nearby hunting lodge is easy enough to obtain.

Harbingers of Destruction (EL 17)

By the time the characters arrive in the vicinity of Nether Hogsholt, the Cult of the Monolith has connected the Material Plane to the Plane of Shadow. In a hundred-mile radius surrounding the circle of stones, the sky turns black. The circle itself is consumed by Lacc, and anyone stepping into it is transported to the Plane of Shadow.

When the characters arrive, they have only few moments to contemplate the unnatural darkness before they notice a wounded woman riding toward them. Her name is **Elana** (LG female human paladin 5).

When Elana catches sight of the characters, she reins in her mount and speaks in an agitated manner. She is the sole surviving member of an adventuring company known as the Bright Swords, which the ruling council of High Bastion sent to investigate the strange events in the countryside. Their investigation revealed that members of a sect known as the Cult of the Monolith had a dark ritual planned for a circle of stones outside the village, but when the Swords went to disrupt it, the sky went black and the cultists transformed into undead monsters and slaughtered Elana's companions. Now they hunt her, and she begs the characters for assistance.

Elana knows little about the Cult of the Monolith beyond its association with darkness and undeath. If pressed for information, she remembers that the leader of the Bright Swords told her that the cultists were trying to summon something called Lacc, which Elana erroneously believes to be a demon. The characters have only half a minute to pump Elana for information before the undead cultists arrive.

Creatures: As a byproduct of the dark power unleashed in connecting Lacc to the Material Plane, several of the cultists involved were transformed into powerful undead. The cult's leader, Gothos, is now a nightshade nightwalker, while four of his minions are dread wraiths. They are startled to discover that their prey has enlisted help, but attack without hesitation, confident in their newfound power.

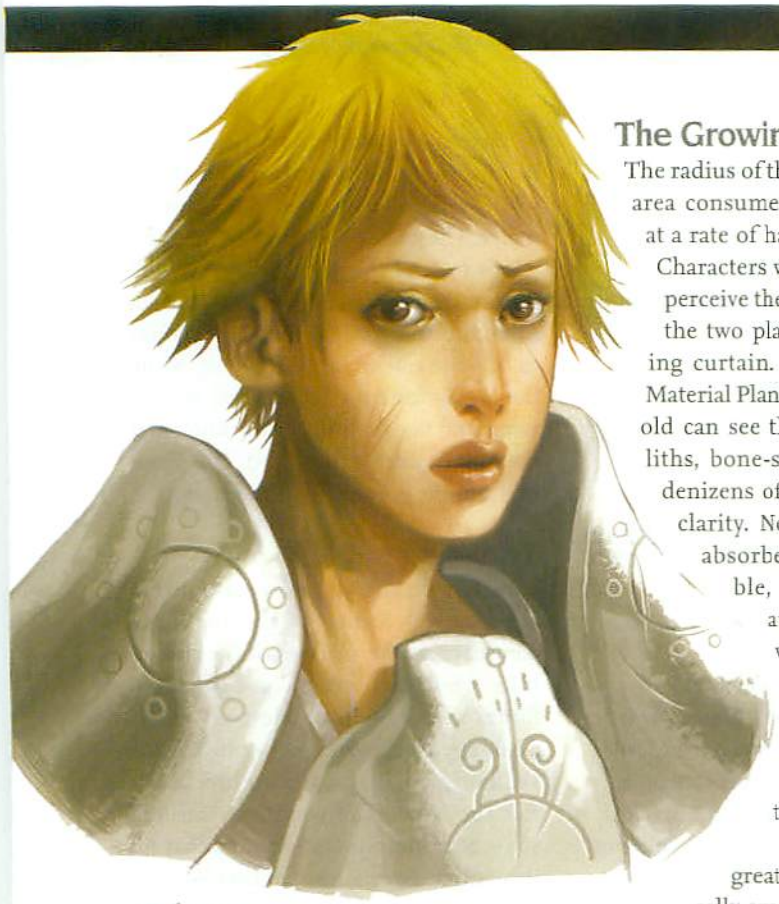
Elana won't be much help in this fight, as she is far outclassed by the opposition. If you need statistics for her, use the 5th-level NPC paladin statistics given on page 118 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Gothos, Nightshade Nightwalker: hp 178; *Monster Manual* 196.

Dread Wraiths (4): hp 104 each; *Monster Manual* 258.

Tactics: The former cultists initially concentrate on killing Elana, though they also target characters wearing holy symbols and adjust their tactics once their foes prove their competence. Gothos spends his first turn casting *haste* and a quickened *unholy blight*, then wades into melee so his minions can be empowered by his desecrating aura.

Throughout the fight, Gothos uses telepathy to taunt the PCs, crowing about Lacc's imminent consumption of the world and how the city's monoliths will crush their bones to powder.



Elana

Even on the verge of defeat, his confidence in their doom is unshakable.

Development: If Elana survives the fight, she begs the PCs to allow her to warn High Bastion of the cult's actions. The darkness in the sky is expanding, and characters who succeed on a DC 20 Spot check notice what appears to be a pair of immense monoliths looming at its center.

Before Elana leaves, she gives the PCs a strange map. If she is killed, the PCs find it on her corpse. Drafted on human skin, the map is covered with carefully charted concentric circles which are centered on a point 40 miles to the northeast of High Bastion. Crabbed calculations fill the map's margins. A DC 25 Knowledge (geography) check or consulting a sage, surveyor, or merchant reveals that the point at the center of the circles is a circle of stones outside a tiny village known as Nether Hogsholt, directly in the center of the expanding darkness. A DC 30 Decipher Script check reveals that the marginalia gauge the rate of expansion of a circular area that should take slightly longer than 3 days to encompass High Bastion.

The Growing Darkness

The radius of the darkness and the area consumed by Lacc expands at a rate of half a mile per hour. Characters who cross into Lacc perceive the threshold between the two planes as a shimmering curtain. Characters on the Material Plane side of the threshold can see the looming monoliths, bone-strewn streets, and denizens of Lacc with chilling clarity. Non-magical objects absorbed by Lacc crumble, corrode, or decay at accelerated rates, while plants rot and die. Within an hour of being consumed, nothing remains of them but dust.

Shadows and greater shadows periodically emerge from Lacc as it expands, but their numbers skyrocket whenever Lacc approaches a town or city. The exact consequences of this swarming behavior depend on your campaign world, but entire settlements may be transformed into shadows or have to be evacuated (including High Bastion, if the PCs take too long). As agents of the Cult of the Monolith proclaim the end of the world and encourage mass panic, villainous organizations may try to ally with Xin or take advantage of the chaos.

The following rules apply when characters are in Lacc or elsewhere on the Plane of Shadow.

Light: The only natural source of illumination in Lacc is the occasional monolith that flickers with ghostly radiance, casting light in a 10-foot radius. All other light sources have their ranges halved on the Plane of Shadow, and since spells with the light or fire descriptors are impeded, a spellcaster must succeed on a Spellcraft check (DC 20 + spell level) to cast these spells.

Shadow Magic: Spells with the shadow descriptor are cast as though they were prepared with the Maximize Spell feat, though they don't require higher-level spell slots. Furthermore,

The Coming Doom

When the characters first learn about the expanding shadow and its connection to the city of Lacc, have them make the following Knowledge checks to uncover the given information. You can also use this information to craft responses to *commune* or *divination* spells, as appropriate.

Knowledge (arcana)

DC 20: Ancient texts speak of a city known as Lacc, ruled by an immortal wizard who was jealous of the living.

DC 25: This wizard's name was Tenaris Xin, and he was a shade—a being of shadow that draws power from the darkness around him.

DC 30: Xin's hatred of life and light was such that he built the Colorless, Empty, and Hollow gates, through which Lacc could expand to swallow whole worlds. Destroying all the gates should halt the expansion.

DC 35: Only by destroying Xin and ensuring that none of his followers rebuild the gates can a world be freed from Lacc's all-consuming hunger.

Knowledge (the planes)

DC 20: Lacc is the name of a vast city on the Plane of Shadow. Known as "the city of monoliths," it is ruled by a shadowy entity known as Tenaris Xin.

DC 25: Legend has it that Lacc has swallowed other Planes whole, and that its streets are paved with layer upon layer of bones.

DC 30: Xin's goal is to drain all life and color from the multiverse, so that no one may possess anything that he is denied. Three able lieutenants serve him: Heithuras, a shadow dragon; Kung, a nightshade nightwalker; and Sesorya Girgul, a human priestess.

DC 35: Kung was once one of Xin's greatest foes; Sesorya Girgul betrayed her world to Xin in exchange for power.

Knowledge (religion)

DC 20: The Cult of the Monolith preaches a doctrine of annihilation and death, and the object of its veneration is known as Lacc.

DC 25: The Cult of the Monolith believes that on the day Lacc enters the world, the sun and stars shall die, and all that is will cease to be.

DC 30: Lacc is not a god or a outsider, but a *city of monoliths* and bones. It is said to exist on the infinite expanse of the Plane of Shadow, where darkness is eternal.

shadow conjuration and *shadow evocation* are 30% as powerful as the spells they mimic (not 20%), *greater shadow conjuration* and *greater shadow evocation* are 70% as powerful (not 60%), and *shades* is 90% as powerful (not 80%).

Morphic Terrain: The geography of the Plane of Shadow shifts constantly, and Lacc is no exception to this rule—monoliths grind from place to place, piles of bones shift and collapse, and landmarks disappear. For every two hours that pass, there is a cumulative 5% chance that an outdoor location in Lacc changes sufficiently to render it a "false destination" for the purposes of a *teleport* or *greater teleport*.

Into the Shadows (EL 18)

Read the following description when characters enter Lacc for the first time, whether by crossing the threshold on foot or by using spells like *plane shift*.

The sky overhead is a featureless black, and ebon monoliths loom on all sides, divided by broad avenues. The avenues are layered with bones, many of them humanoid, though the bones of dragons and other monstrous beasts are visible as well. Some of the monoliths flicker with ghostly radiance, which does little to illuminate the darkened expanse. The blackened vault of heaven seethes with scraps of shadow, and the bone-strewn avenues are choked with tenebrous shapes that flit about without direction or purpose. In some places, vast mounds of rubble or dunes of pale sand obscure the bones of the avenue.

The sand is all that remains of many centuries of bones being worn down to powder.

Creatures: Kung has dispersed hundreds of patrols around Lacc's border with the Material Plane, and any time the PCs approach the boundary they encounter such a group. A typical patrol consists of a nightwing, a nightwalker, and a greater shadesteel golem (a skeletal figure shrouded in mist and wrought of matte-black metal).

Greater Shadesteel Golem CR 14
N Large construct
Monster Manual III 72
Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Listen +0, Spot +0
Languages None

AC 33, touch 11, flat-footed 31
hp 178 (27 HD), **DR** 15/admantine and magic
Immune magic
Fort +9, **Ref** +11, **Will** +9

Spd 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (perfect)
Melee 2 slams +31 (2d10+12)
Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.
Base Atk +20 **Grp** +36
Special Actions negative pulse wave (DC 23)

Abilities Str 34, Dex 14, Con —, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 7
SQ shadow blend
Feats —
Skills Hide +11, Move Silently +15

Immunity to Magic (Ex) A greater shadesteel golem is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance. In addition, a magical effect that has the light descriptor causes the golem to gain the benefits of the *haste* spell for 2d4 rounds. The golem is also hasted whenever it is subject to a positive energy effect, such as the turning attempt of a cleric. If a shadesteel golem is targeted by or within the area of a spell from the shadow subschool or with the darkness descriptor, it is healed of 1 point of damage per level of the spell.

Negative Pulse Wave (Su) A greater shadesteel golem can radiate a burst of inky black negative energy as a free action every 1d4+1 rounds. The pulse wave deals 12d6 points of damage from negative energy to all living creatures within a 40-ft. radius (Fortitude DC 23 half). Undead creatures in the area are healed of 12d6 points of damage, and any turning effect they are under is broken. A *death ward* spell or similar effect renders a creature immune to this effect.

Shadow Blend (Su) In any condition of illumination less than full daylight, a greater shadesteel golem can disappear into the shadows, giving it concealment. Artificial illumination (even a *light* or *continual flame* spell) does not negate this ability, though a *daylight* spell does.

Nightshade Nightwalker: hp 178; *Monster Manual* 196.

Nightshade Nightwing: hp 144; *Monster Manual* 197.

Tactics: The nightshades begin combat by summoning greater shadows, while the golem closes to engage in melee. The golem uses its negative pulse waves to heal the nightshades as well as to rally any undead who are turned. After the first round, the nightwalker casts *haste* and engages in melee, while the nightwing uses *unholy blight* at long range and flees to find reinforcements if the nightwalker is destroyed. The shadows and the golem fight to the death.

Traveling in Lacc

Lacc is a haunting and ever-shifting environment. Strings of glowing runes dance across the surfaces of the monoliths, while half-seen shapes twist and flutter across the featureless sky. Pools of sludgy black water gather inside the skulls of giant beasts, and the breeze carries the laments of countless tortured souls. Still, despite the shadows that flit through its streets, most of Lacc is desolate and empty. Though it is not truly infinite, a man would die of old age before he could cross the city on foot.

The avenues of Lacc range from 50 to 400 feet wide. Any street narrower than 100 feet wide is invariably rough terrain, as mounds of rubble and heaps of bones make progress difficult. A typical monolith is a block of black stone 200 feet wide, 200 feet long, and 600 feet tall, with a pyramidal crest (though they come in all shapes and sizes).

By the time they enter Lacc, characters should have some idea of the dangers they face and what they need to do, either through Knowledge skills or divination magic. *Find the path* leads the characters toward any of the gates or Xin's tower, though all four locations are secured with *dimensional lock* to keep out intruders. For every three hours spent traveling in Lacc, roll on the encounter table or pick from it to liven up the adventure's pace. Add +30 to the d% roll and reduce the time between checks to two hours if the PCs carry a light source or if a nightwing has escaped to find reinforcements. If the PCs are being particularly incautious, check for an encounter every hour, and add +55 to the d% instead of +30.

Lacc Encounters

d%	Encounter	Average EL
01–15	1d6+3 greater shadows	13
16–30	1d4+2 dread wraiths	15
31–45	1d2+1 nightshade nightwings	16
46–55	Light patrol	17
56–65	1d2+1 shadow elementals	18
66–75	Elite patrol	18
76–80	Moving monolith	18
81–95	1 nightshade nightcrawler	18
96–105	Heithuras flyby	19
106+	Reconnaisance in Force	20

Greater Shadows/Dread Wraiths/Nightwings/Nightcrawler/Shadow Elementals: These creatures are not part of Xin's forces, and fight without discipline. These nightwings do not flee for reinforcements.

Greater Shadows: hp 58 each; *Monster Manual* 221.

Dread Wraiths: hp 104 each; *Monster Manual* 258.

Nightshade Nightwings: hp 144 each; *Monster Manual* 197.

Nightshade Nightcrawler: hp 212; *Monster Manual* 195.

Shadow Elementals: hp 342 each; see page 75.

Light Patrol: A light patrol consists of 2 nightshade nightwings, a greater shadesteel golem, and 1d4+1 greater shadows. If one of the nightwings is defeated, the second flees for reinforcements.

Greater Shadesteel Golem: hp 178; see page 70.

Elite Patrol: An elite patrol consists of 1 nightshade nightwalker with 2 greater shadesteel golems assigned to guard it.

Nightshade Nightwalker: hp 178; *Monster Manual* 196.

Moving Monolith: Read the following description the first time you run this encounter.

A low rumbling makes the bones and ruined flagstones of the avenue tremble as a massive shape shifts in the darkness, slowly revealing itself as a vast monolith, sliding across the landscape and crushing everything in its path. Its surface is rimed with whorls of black frost, and a pair of hulking, rocklike figures flank its leading edge, using massive iron rods to direct the monolith's glacial progress.

The figures are a pair of greater stone golems, under instructions to rearrange the city's monoliths in a pattern that helps focus the energy of the gates. So long as no one approaches within 200 feet of the monolith, they continue nudging the monolith back on course, but if anyone interferes with their work, they attack.

Greater Stone Golems (2): hp 271 each; *Monster Manual* 136.

Heithuras flyby: The characters are unfortunate enough to have drawn the attention of the shadow dragon Heithuras on one of her periodic patrols through the skies of Lacc.

Heithuras: hp 322; see page 73.

Tactics: As per The Colorless Gate, without the last paragraph.

Development: As Heithuras is responsible for defending the Colorless Gate, she withdraws if she suffers more than 120 hp of damage. After healing herself and informing Xin of the intruders, she conceals herself near the Colorless Gate, casts *nondetection*, and awaits their arrival.

Should Heithuras be slain, the Colorless Gate is left undefended and Sesorya Girgul approaches the characters (see Appendix 2).

Reconnaissance in Force: Either through ill luck or overconfidence, the characters have drawn the attention of Xin's nightwalker general, Kung, and his bodyguard.

Kung: hp 212; see page 72.

Greater Shadesteel Golems (2): hp 178 each; see page 70.

Nightshade Nightwings (2): hp 144 each; *Monster Manual* 197.

Tactics: See The Hollow Gate below.

Development: Should the PCs run, Kung and his minions pursue them as best they can. Should Kung be defeated, see the development section of the Hollow Gate encounter area for his message to the PCs.

Unlike Heithuras, if Kung is destroyed, the Hollow Gate still has guardians. A pair of ordinary nightwalkers take his place there whenever he goes on patrol.

The Empty Gate (EL 19)

The vast plain of dark monoliths is broken here by an irregularly shaped crater thirty feet wide and fifteen feet deep. In the center of the crater, surrounded by loose bones and rubble, stands an ornately carved gem-studded crystal archway. Inside the arch, nothing is visible except a plain void, empty of both feature and color.

The Empty Gate is located roughly 16 miles to the northwest of the center of Lacc's expansion, within a sinkhole filled with loose bones and rubble. The floor of the crater counts as rough terrain. The gate itself is 10 feet wide by 10 feet tall, and any living creature that steps through it is affected by a *greater dispel magic* (CL 20) and suffers 12d6 points of damage from negative energy before emerging from the gate's far side.

The Empty Gate has a hardness of 20, 400 hit points and an SR of 28. A *dimensional lock* effect surrounds it in a 500-foot radius.

Creatures: The Empty Gate is guarded by the Mouth of the Void, an immense nightshade nightcrawler. Three rounds after characters descend to the crater floor, the Mouth burrows up from beneath the floor of bones, accompanied by a greater shadesteel golem.

In addition to the undead it can summon on its own, the Mouth of the Void can summon a greater shadow from within the Empty Gate once per round as a free action. These shadows appear beside the gate and remain for an hour, dissolving if either the nightcrawler or the Empty Gate is destroyed.

The Mouth of the Void, Nightshade Nightcrawler: hp 350; *Monster Manual* 195.

Greater Shadesteel Golem: hp 178; see page 70.

Greater Shadows: hp 58 each; *Monster Manual* 221.

Tactics: The Mouth of the Void uses *summon undead* and *haste* before it erupts from beneath the rubble. It concentrates its attacks on spellcasters or characters attacking the Empty Gate. The shadesteel golem uses its negative pulse wave to heal the Mouth of the Void and injure intruders, as the greater shadows are not covered by its instructions. The greater shadows attack the nearest living target.

Treasure: The Empty Gate is set with a dozen fist-sized diamonds, each worth 5,000 gp, which can only be removed once it has been destroyed.

The Hollow Gate (EL 20)

The monotonous expanse of monoliths gives way to a one-hundred-twenty-foot-square plaza of black stone. Two massive obelisks grind away at the edge of the plaza, periodically causing the entire plain to shiver. In the center of the plaza looms a forbidding archway that appears to have been cut from a single, immense black diamond. A featureless dark void is visible through the arch.

The Hollow Gate is located roughly 16 miles to the northeast of the center of Lacc's expansion. A pair of monoliths flanks the plaza, grinding against it and giving rise to tremors every 1d4 minutes. When a tremor hits, characters standing on the plaza must make DC 20 Balance checks or fall prone. The gate itself is 10 feet wide by 10 feet tall, and any living creature that passes through the gate arch is affected by *finger of death* (CL 20, DC 23 Fortitude partial). A character slain by this effect has their soul trapped in the gate as per *soul bind* (DC 26 Will negates).

The Hollow Gate has a hardness of 20, 400 hit points, and an SR of 28. A *dimensional lock* effect surrounds it in a 500-foot radius.

Creatures: The Hollow Gate is guarded by Kung and his bodyguard of shadesteel golems and nightwings. Kung and the golems hover beside the gate, keeping watch, while the nightwings circle overhead and let out piercing cries if they catch sight of intruders.

A pair of nightshade nightwalkers take Kung's place whenever he goes on patrol. If a nightwing escaped with news of Kung's demise, the golems and nightwings Kung took with him on patrol will have been replaced as well.

KUNG **CR 18**

Male advanced evolved nightshade nightwalker
CE Huge undead
Libris Mortis 99, *Monster Manual* 195
Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Spot +33, Listen +33
Languages telepathy 100 ft.
Aura desecrating aura (20-ft. radius)

AC 33 (–2 size, +2 Dex, +23 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 30
hp 212 (25 HD); fast healing 3 **DR** 15/silver and magic
Immune cold, undead traits
SR 29
Fort +12, **Ref** +12, **Will** +21

Spd 40 ft., **fly** 20 ft. (poor)
Melee 2 slams +27 (2d6+17)
Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.
Base Atk +12 **Grp** +35
Attack Options Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm, Power Attack

Destroying the Gates

The destruction of a single gate has no effect on the rate of Lacc's expansion, though it creates imbalances that make it impossible for Lacc to establish a bridgehead on another world until the gate is replaced. The destruction of two gates halves the rate of Lacc's expansion to a quarter-mile per hour, while the destruction of all 3 gates brings Lacc's expansion to a dead halt. Those who banish Lacc from their world forever must slay both Tenaris Xin and Sesorya Girgul before the city releases the territory it has consumed.

Special Actions crush item, desecrating aura, evil gaze (DC 27), summon undead

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 25th)

At will—*contagion* (DC 19), *deeper darkness, detect magic, greater dispel magic, haste, see invisibility, and unholy blight* (DC 19, quickened 3/day)

3/day—*confusion* (DC 19), *hold monster* (DC 20), *invisibility*

2/day—quickened *cone of cold* (DC 20)

1/day—*finger of death* (DC 22), *plane shift* (DC 22)

Abilities Str 40, Dex 14, Con —, Int 20, Wis 20, Cha 21

SQ aversion to daylight

Feats Cleave, Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes, Great Fortitude, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*cone of cold*), Quicken Spell-Like Ability (*unholy blight*)

Skills Concentration +32, Diplomacy +7, Hide +22 (+30 in a dark area), Knowledge (arcana) +33, Listen +33, Move Silently +30, Search +33, Sense Motive +33, Spellcraft +35, Spot +33, Survival +5 (+7 following tracks)

Greater Shadesteel Golems (2): hp 178 each; see page 70.

Nightshade Nightwings (2): hp 144 each; *Monster Manual* 197.

Tactics: Kung and his nightwings keep *haste* and *see invisibility* continually active. Kung uses his summon undead ability as soon as he becomes aware of intruders. The nightwings use *cone of cold*, *finger of death*, and *unholy blight*, and attempt to drain magic from enemy weapons, while Kung and the golems engage in melee. The golems use their negative pulse wave to affect as many targets as possible, while Kung targets healers and characters who damage the golems, using his quickened *cone of cold* and *unholy blight* abilities to full effect. Though Kung and the golems fight to the death, the nightshade nightwings flee to inform Xin of Kung's demise if he should be defeated.

Development: If reduced to 0 hp, Kung is not immediately destroyed. Rather, his imminent dissolution frees him from Xin's thrall, allowing him to send the PCs a telepathic message. Read or paraphrase the following.

As the massive nightwalker topples, a deep, pained voice speaks from the darkness. "Thank you, liberators. For centuries I have been Xin's slave. If you would save your world, destroy the three gates, my master, and his lieutenants. Heithuras is a fell foe, but Girgul is worse. Slay them all, so I may be avenged!"

After Kung delivers his message, his body dissolves into nothingness.

Treasure: The Hollow Gate is set with a dozen fist-sized diamonds, each worth 5,000 gp, which can only be removed once it has been destroyed.

The Colorless Gate (EL 19)

A massive monolith looms over a dull plaza strewn with dozens of skeletons and corpses in varying stages of decomposition. The already muted colors of the Plane of Shadows fade away completely here, the entire area defined only in shades of gray. In the center of the plaza, a shimmering bubble of energy pulsates with a strange, colorless light.

The Colorless Gate is located 16 miles due south from the center of Lacc's expansion. Colors fade to a indistinct gray within 500 feet of the Colorless Gate, imposing a –5 penalty on Spot checks and a –10 penalty on Spellcraft checks to identify active spells. Any living creature unfortunate enough to pass through the Colorless Gate becomes permanently colorless and colorblind (no save), suffering the penalties indicated above; this effect can only be reversed by a *wish* or *miracle*.

The Colorless Gate was badly damaged by a group of heroes from the last world absorbed by Lacc, and has hardness 20, 127 hit points and an SR of 28. Like the other two gates, it is surrounded by a *dimensional lock* effect that extends in a 500-foot radius, but unlike the other two gates it has an additional line of defense: a permanent *prismatic sphere* surrounds it. Because of the gate's effects, the Spellcraft check to identify the sphere is exceptionally difficult. The gate itself is 10 feet wide by 10 feet tall, and appears to be carved from granite.

Creatures: Since it was damaged, the Colorless Gate has been guarded by Heithuras, a shadow dragon who has been indoctrinated by the Cult of the Monolith since her hatching. Heithuras is a vain and sadistic creature whose only loyalty is to Tenaris Xin and his doctrine of universal annihilation, and she takes great joy in slaughtering anyone who stands in the way of Lacc's implacable expansion.

HEITHURAS **CR 19**

Female very old shadow dragon

Draconomicon 191

CE Huge dragon

Init +0; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft., keen senses; Spot +39, Listen +39

Languages Abyssal, Draconic

Aura frightful presence (270-ft. radius, DC 32)

AC 43, touch 8, flat-footed 43

hp 322 (28 HD) **DR** 15/magic

Immune energy drain, paralysis, sleep

SR 28

Fort +21, **Ref** +16, **Will** +24

Spd 80 ft., fly 150 ft. (poor)

Melee† bite +25 (3d8+19) and 2 claws +23 (2d6+14) and 2 wings +23 (2d6+14) and tail slap +23 (2d6+23)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (15 ft. with bite)

Base Atk +28 **Grp** +45

Attack Options Awesome Blow, Flyby Attack, Power Attack, Snatch

Special Actions breath weapon (60-ft. cone, 5 negative levels, DC 32 Reflex save half), crush (2d8+13)

Spells Known (CL 11th)

5th (5/day)—*shadow evocation* (DC 23), *telekinesis* (DC 23)
4th (8/day)—*cure critical wounds, dimensional anchor, freedom of movement*
3rd (8/day)—*dispel magic, haste, invisibility purge, protection from energy*
2nd (8/day)—*augury, bull's strength, command undead* (DC 20), *death knell* (DC 20), *spiritual weapon*
1st (7/day)—*chill touch* (DC 19), *divine favor, mage armor**, *shield, shield of faith*
0 (6/day)—*arcane mark, detect magic, detect poison, disrupt undead, guidance, mending, read magic, resistance, virtue*

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th)
3/day—*mirror image, nondetection*
2/day—*dimension door*
†10-point Power Attack
* already cast.

Abilities Str 29, Dex 10, Con 21, Int 26, Wis 26, Cha 27
SQ shadow blend
Feats Awesome Blow, Blind-Fight, Flyby Attack, Hover, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Natural Attack (Bite), Improved Natural Attack (Wing), Multiattack, Power Attack, Snatch
Skills Concentration +36, Diplomacy +39, Escape Artist +31, Hide +31, Intimidate +39, Knowledge (arcana) +39, Knowledge (the planes) +39, Move Silently +31, Listen +39, Sense Motive +39, Spellcraft +23, Spot +39, Survival +23, Use Magic Device +39

Energy Drain Immunity (Ex) Shadow dragons are immune to energy drain attacks, as well as any other effect that bestows negative levels.
Shadow Blend (Su) In any condition of illumination less than full daylight, Heithuras can disappear into the shadows, gaining total concealment. No artificial illumination short of a *daylight* spell negates this ability.

Tactics: If Heithuras hears intruders coming and has time to prepare, she casts *freedom of movement, protection from energy* (fire and electricity), *shield, bull's strength, shield of faith, invisibility purge, mirror image, shadow evocation* (*fire shield* [warm]), *divine favor*, and *haste*.

So long as no one approaches the Colorless Gate or the sphere surrounding it, Heithuras fights from the air, strafing opponents with her breath weapon and harrying them with *shadow evocation* and *spiritual weapon*. She takes sadistic glee in casting *death knell* on dying foes.

Should anyone approach within 100 feet of the sphere or attempt to dispel it, Heithuras changes tactics, using Awesome Blow, Snatch, and *telekinesis* to force the offending characters into the sphere. Though it would be easy for Heithuras to flee, her pride and loyalty to Xin compel her to fight to the death.

Treasure: The Colorless Gate is set with twelve fist-sized diamonds, each worth 5,000 gp, which can only be pried loose once it has been destroyed. Though most of the corpses have been stripped of their gear, one clutches an arcane scroll with the spells *daylight, gust of wind*, and *passwall* to its chest, and wears a *scarab of protection* with 6 charges remaining.

Development: Shortly after the PCs defeat Heithuras, Sesorya Girgul approaches the PCs. See Appendix 2 for her statistics and tactics.

Chapter Two: Spire of Night

The stronghold of Tenaris Xin and the Cult of the Monolith, the Obsidian Spike is a needle of volcanic stone that rises 900 feet above the avenues of Lacc. Its walls crackle with ghostly energy, and a flock of nightshade nightwings circles its pinnacle.

The Approach

A 500-foot radius around the Spike has been cleared of monoliths, rubble, and other cover, allowing the sentries at area **1** a clear view of anyone approaching. Though there are between twelve and twenty nightwings circling the Spike at all times, they are so enraptured by their song that they pay no heed to characters unless they attack them or attempt to breach the Spike's walls. In such an event, the nightwings raise the alarm and attack in waves of four.

The Obsidian Spike is usually much better defended, but Sesorya Girgul has sent most of its guards to scour the city for intruders, deliberately leaving it vulnerable. With the exception of area **11**, the entire tower is affected by *dimensional lock* and *unhallow*, and its walls have hardness 20 and 2000 hp per 10-foot cube. Spellcasters casting *passwall, transmute rock to mud*, and similar spells on the Spike must overcome SR 28, even if the spell does not usually allow spell resistance. Attempts to breach the walls are likely to draw the ire of the nightwings, and those who bypass the lower levels must be careful to keep the guards ignorant of their presence.

1. Door Guards (EL 18)

From the center of a swath of bone and rubble rises a slender obsidian tower, its walls crackling with arcs of violet energy as they converge to a needle-sharp point. Immense shadows flit in circles around its pinnacle, and a distant choir of unearthly voices seems to sing a ghastly dirge. A leering demonic visage is set into the tower's base on the western side, and its open maw appears to be the tower's only entrance.

Creatures: A pair of nightshade nightwalkers is posted here to receive messages and keep out intruders. Unless a nightwing escaped to bring news of Kung's destruction to Xin, they suffer a –10 circumstance penalty on Spot and Listen checks due to inattention.

Nightshade Nightwalkers (2): hp 178; *Monster Manual* 196.

Tactics: The nightwalkers keep *see invisibility* constantly active. Once combat begins, one uses *haste* while the other heads through area **2** to raise the alarm. Once the alarm has been raised, the nightwalkers wade into melee, making liberal use of quickened *unholy blight* in an attempt to take down spellcasters.

Development: If one of the nightshades raises the alarm, the cultists in areas **4–9** prepare for an ambush, as described in area **3**.

2. Blighted Corridor

This broad corridor is over twenty feet tall, and leads to a pair of immense iron double doors. Its floor is paved with headstones,

and dark energy limns the walls, seeming to ooze out of the uncut stone.

This corridor is a darkland, and living characters take 1d6 points of damage from negative energy each round they remain within it (*death ward* negates this damage). The doors at the end of the corridor are unlocked.

3. Entrance Hall (EL 18)

The tower's octagonal entrance hall is built to grand proportions, though the tapestries that adorn its walls are faded and threadbare. On the hall's far side, an immense staircase leads up to a darkened gallery, while a pair of immense stone statues flank the stairs. The gigantic figures crouch with their chins in their hands, as if in thought.

While all the galleries (areas **4**, **6**, **9**, and **11**) on the second floor overlook the entrance hall, one-way *illusory walls* conceal all of them but area **4**. Characters who examine the tapestries closely (Search DC 30) find that all of them are splashed with human blood.

Creatures: While canny PCs may expect the statues to animate and attack, they actually conceal the room's true guardians. When a character enters the hall, a permanent *magic mouth* asks, "What is the destiny of all worlds?" If the characters do not reply "Oblivion," the shadow elementals concealed within the statues attack.

Shadow elementals are formless masses of inky blackness that drain the light from their surroundings as they pass. Their shape continuously shifts into dim reflections of objects and creatures in their vicinity.

Advanced Elder Shadow Elementals (2) **CR 16**

NE Huge elemental (incorporeal)

Tome of Magic 164

Init +10; **Senses** blindsight 60 ft.; Listen +44, Spot +44

Languages Common (does not speak)

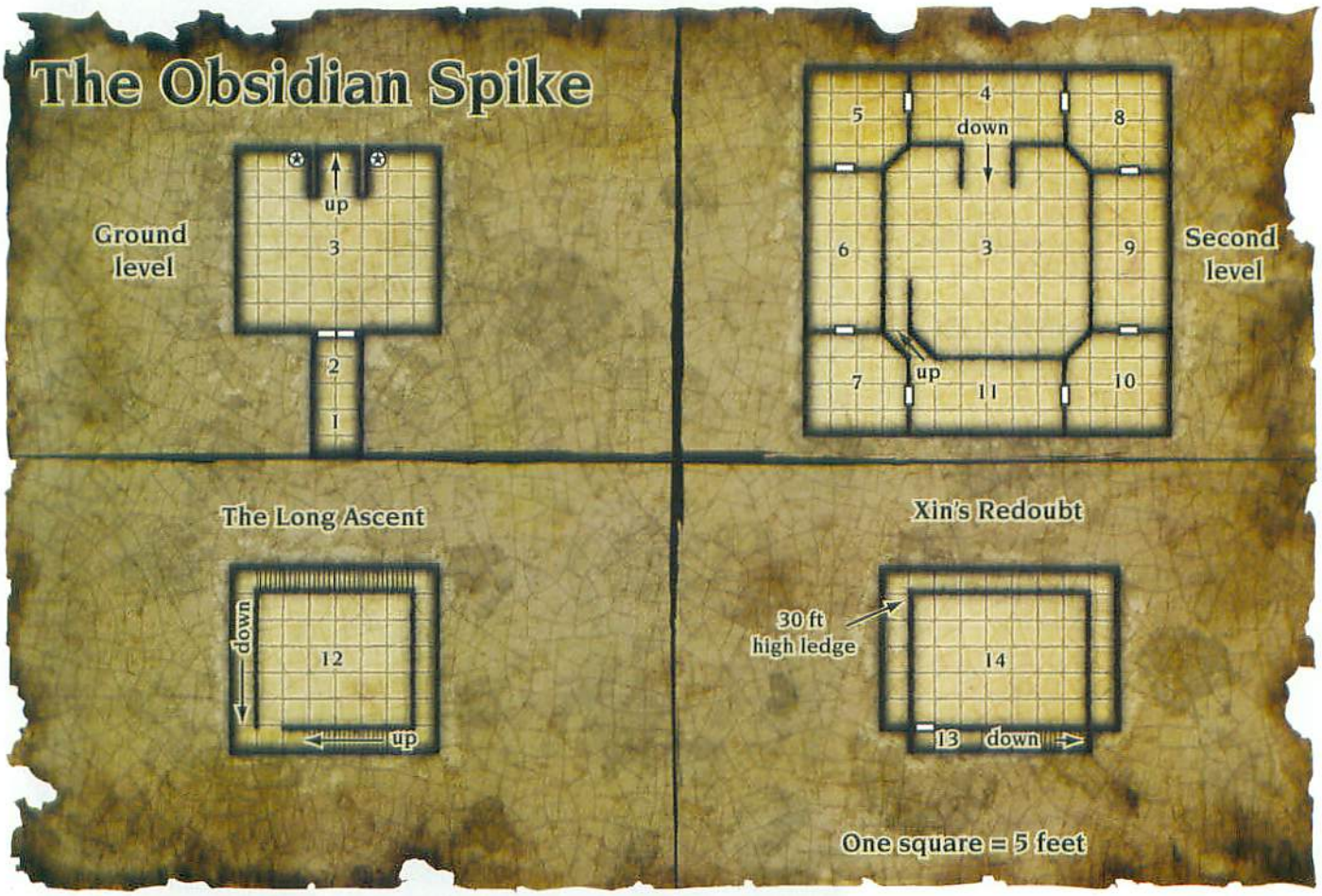
AC 15, touch 14, flat-footed 9; Dodge, Mobility

hp 342 (36 HD)

Immune elemental traits, incorporeal traits

Fort +16, **Ref** +26, **Will** +11

Spd fly 40 ft. (perfect)



Melee 2 incorporeal touches +32 (3d6 plus 6d6 cold)
Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.
Base Atk +27 **Grp** —
Special Actions dusk and dawn 3/day

Abilities Str —, Dex 23, Con 20, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 11
SQ shadow mastery
Feats Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Improved Natural Attack (incorporeal touch), Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Weapon Focus (incorporeal touch), Spring Attack, Skill Focus (Hide), Skill Focus (Listen), Skill Focus (Spot)
Skills Hide +9, Listen +44, Spot +44

Shadow Mastery (Ex) A shadow elemental gains a +1 bonus on attack and damage rolls if both it and its foe are in an area of darkness or shadowy illumination. While in an area of bright light (such as natural sunlight or a *daylight* spell), shadow elementals take a –4 penalty on attack and damage rolls.

Dusk and Dawn (Su) Three times per day, a shadow elemental can create shadowy illumination as a 20-foot-radius emanation centered on a point in space within 60 feet. This effect lasts for 180 minutes and is an evocation effect. Creatures with darkvision can see through this area normally.

Development: If a nightwalker from area **1** raises the alarm or they hear the sounds of battle, the cultists and apprentices from areas **4–9** mobilize. The sentries from area **5** move into area **4**, while Lachan and Xevis join the cultists on the balcony of area **6**. The sentries, wardens, and shadesteel golem descend to engage intruders in melee, while Lachan, Xevis, and the Curator support them at range.

4. Map Gallery (EL 13)

The walls and floor of this gallery are inlaid with elaborate gray and black mosaics. Half a dozen map tables are spread around the room, and more maps hang from the walls, many of them unbelievably ancient. All are in good repair, as if someone has expended a great amount of effort to restore them. Matched stone doors lead north and south, and a balustrade overlooks the entrance hall to the west.

This gallery contains maps of some of the worlds that Lacc has consumed, as well as the PCs' home world. The largest map table displays the area around Lacc's beachhead, and if the PCs haven't halted Lacc's expansion, they can watch as their world is slowly devoured. The other tables are covered with maps of major cities, including High Bastion, with invasion plans marked on them. A DC 30 Knowledge (history) check reveals that the attacks are meant to cut off all avenues of escape.

Creatures: The maps in this gallery (and areas **6** and **9**) are maintained by the Curator, an ancient mind flayer who

foresaw the destruction of his world and journeyed to Lacc to pledge his power to Xin. Amused by this display, Xin spared the mind flayer's life and put him to work as an archivist. Since then, the Curator has served as Xin's lackey and errand boy, carrying messages to cultists on many worlds, and though he detests copying and restoring maps, he is conscientious in his duties.

The Curator, Mind Flayer Sorcerer 9: hp 109; *Monster Manual* 187.

If the alarm is raised or combat breaks out in area **3**, the Curator casts *stoneskin*, *greater invisibility*, and *fly*, rising to hover near the gallery's ceiling. It uses telepathy to alert the cultists in areas **5–9** and supports them with *mind blast*, *haste*, and *ray of exhaustion*. The Curator disdains melee, descending to extract a helpless opponent's brain only if their companions are pinned down elsewhere.

5. Guardroom (EL 17)

This chamber is furnished with chairs that seem to have been carved from blocks of jet. A battered wooden mannequin leans against the eastern wall with the blade of a kama imbedded in its forehead. The northern wall is lined with open coffins, which are lushly padded. Weapon racks flank the doors set into the southern and western walls.

Creatures: A pair of vampire sentries and their shadow companions stands watch in this room, ready to respond to any disturbance. These sentries and their companions in areas **5–9** are members of a monastic order that was subverted by the Cult of the Monolith, and have spent centuries training to defend the Obsidian Spike from intruders.

Monolith Sentries, Vampire Monk 9/ Shadowdancer 4 (2): hp 90; AL LE; *Monster Manual* 251.

Shadows (2): hp 19 each; *Monster Manual* 221.

Tactics: If the alarm is raised, these sentries move to area **4**, then engage the intruders on the stairs or leap off the balcony to attack them in area **3**, as appropriate. The sentries fight as a team, flanking a single target and concentrating their attacks on it. They prefer to save their stunning attacks for arcane spellcasters, and use their slam attacks only if they can reliably hit their target.

Development: The coffins in this room are purely for show. All the sentries in areas **5–9** have coffins in area **12**.

6. North Gallery (EL 16)

The floor, walls, and ceiling of this gallery are covered with elaborate mosaics depicting scenes of corruption and decay. An onyx railing runs along the room's southern side, which looks out over the octagonal entrance hall. A monolith motif repeats itself in both the mosaics and the railing, which look as if they were recently restored, and a stepladder leans against the north wall. Stone doors are set in the eastern and western walls, and the underside of a staircase runs parallel to the balcony's western end.

A group of heroes who hoped to save their world by slaying Xin met their end here more than a year ago, and the mosaics and the railing have only recently been restored.

Creatures: An artistically inclined sentry and a mummified cultist from yet another branch of the cult have just finished repairing the ceiling mosaic, and are currently discussing whether the balcony was properly restored. As a result, they respond to an intrusion a round after the other cultists.

Monolith Sentry, Vampire Monk 9/ Shadowdancer 4: hp 90; AL LE; *Monster Manual* 251.

Monolith Warden, Mummy Lord: hp 97; *Monster Manual* 190.

Shadow: hp 19, *Monster Manual* 221.

Tactics: The sentry uses her shadow to flank opponents and makes extensive use of Spring Attack and hide in plain sight, while the warden attempts to hit a rogue or arcane spellcaster with *slay living*. The warden's destruction draws the sentry's ire, causing her to refocus her assault on whoever destroyed him.

7. Laboratory (EL 15)

The interior of this room is crammed with stained and dented wood and metal tables, some of which are laden with alchemical equipment. Notes lie scattered everywhere, and tattered ledgers are heaped atop chairs and piled in corners. A taper of incense burns in a holder in the center of the room, but its smoke fails to cover the nauseating stench of the fumes that fill the air.

Making sense of the ledgers and notes requires a DC 35 Decipher Script check, as they are all but illegible. The bulk of them contain records of failed experiments, but a DC 30 Search check made by or in conjunction with a character who deciphers the ledgers uncovers notes on the construction of the gates that allows characters to bypass their hardness and SR.

Creatures: Lachan and Xevis, two of Xin's undead apprentices, spend their time here in ceaseless research. Though the bulk of their work has no practical application, Xin keeps them at it in hopes of discovering a method of destroying worlds that is even more efficient than absorbing them into Lacc. After centuries together, Lachan and Xevis have come to hate one another, but are too loyal to Xin to act on their mutual loathing.

Lachan and Xevis, Human Lich Wizard 11: hp 74 each; *Monster Manual* 167.

Tactics: If alerted to intruders in area **3**, Lachan and Xevis move to area **6** to support the sentry and warden with ranged magic. They coordinate their attacks, aiming to kill one target before moving on to the next, but their discipline breaks down if they are attacked, and their mutual dislike means neither will retaliate against someone attacking the other.

8. Workshop (EL 16)

Hundreds of tools hang from hooks set into the walls of this chamber, and a workbench flanks the northern door. A small forge stands against the eastern wall, though it seems to have no chimney, leaving the air thick with smoke. The floor is covered with chalk marks, many of them blurred and scuffed. Doors are set in the northern and western walls, and the northwestern corner of the

room overlooks the octagonal entrance hall, with only a hand-high rim separating the floor from a twenty-foot drop.

A one-way *illusiory wall* conceals the workshop from characters in area **3**. As the bulk of the cultists who work here are undead, the workshop is not well ventilated.

Creatures: The workshop is occupied by a greater shadesteel golem, the vampire sentry charged with repairing it, and her shadow companion. They respond to an alarm or intrusion immediately.

Greater Shadesteel Golem: hp 178; see page 70.

Monolith Sentry, Vampire Monk 9/ Shadowdancer 4: hp 90; AL LE; *Monster Manual* 251.

Shadow: hp 19; *Monster Manual* 221.

Tactics: The sentry instructs the golem to heal and rally her fellow cultists before moving to flank a vulnerable target. If she becomes aware of a fight in area **3**, she and the golem leap over the ledge to engage the intruders. The sentry's shadow companion accompanies her and targets characters who are vulnerable or who need to be weakened.

9. South Gallery (EL 16)

Elaborate mosaics cover the floor, walls, and ceiling of this gallery, depicting scenes of annihilation and slaughter. An onyx railing runs along the room's southern side, which looks out over the octagonal entrance hall. Stone doors are set in the eastern and western walls.

Creatures: A bored sentry, her shadow companion, and a mummified warden stand watch here, and are quick to react to any disturbance.

Monolith Sentry, Vampire Monk 9/ Shadowdancer 4: hp 90; AL LE; *Monster Manual* 251.

Monolith Warden, Mummy Lord: hp 97; *Monster Manual* 190.

Shadow: hp 19, *Monster Manual* 221.

Tactics: The sentry uses her shadow to flank opponents and makes extensive use of Spring Attack and hide in plain sight, while the warden attempts to hit a rogue or arcane spellcaster with *slay living*. Unlike the pair in area **6**, this warden and sentry don't much care for each other.

10. Meditation Chamber (EL 16)

This room is filled with burning incense, making the air hazy and dim. Hundreds of skulls are piled against the walls, and the floor is set with a mosaic depicting layer upon layer of bones. Silver goblets and incense burners surround a heap of cream-colored pillows in the room's center, and a platter of freshly picked grapes is propped atop a mound of skulls to one side.

This room serves as Sesorya Girgul's bedroom as well as her meditation chamber. Should the PCs scry on her, they are likely to find her here.

Creatures: Sesorya has set a monolith warden and four dread wraiths to guard her room while she is out, and they attack anyone who enters the room or disturbs its furnishings. These guardians are only concerned with this room, and ignore intruders or alarms in adjacent areas.

Dread Wraiths (4): hp 104 each; *Monster Manual* 258.

Monolith Warden, Mummy Lord: hp 97; *Monster Manual* 190.

Tactics: The monolith warden uses *mass inflict light wounds* to cure the dread wraiths and harm intruders, while the dread wraiths attack injured or sickly characters above all others. These guardians do not pursue fleeing characters unless they obviously intend to regroup.

11. Gallery of Shapes

The walls and ceiling of this gallery crawl with ever-shifting patterns of darkness, many of which protrude several feet from the stonework. The floor is uneven and writhes constantly underfoot, and even the warped balustrade overlooking the entrance hall seems to contort itself. The only static features of the room are the doorways leading to the north and south, and the staircase to the northeast that winds upward around the tower's central shaft.

This is the only area within the spire that is not under the effect of *dimensional lock*. Those who wish to teleport into this gallery must first grasp the patterns that the walls follow, which requires five minutes of uninterrupted study and a successful DC 35 Knowledge (arcana) check; otherwise, the gallery's constant changes render it a "false destination."

12. The Long Ascent (EL 18)

A ten-foot-wide flight of stairs clings to the interior of the tower's central shaft, spiraling upward past narrow slits in the inner walls and landings crammed with upright sepulchers. Mobile shrouds of darkness seem to shift higher in the shaft, and the occasional low moan can be heard coming through the walls, as if the tower itself is somehow in pain. The stairs are well-worn, and in places their inmost edge is crumbling, sending streams of dust into the shadows below.

The central shaft rises for 800 feet, and the sepulchers and slits in the walls continue all the way up. The slits lead through several feet of rock to hidden chambers crammed with the coffins of all the sentries from areas **5–9**, as well as the vampires Sesorya Girgul sent out to patrol Lacc's borders. There are hundreds of sepulchers lining the shaft, and even more in the hidden chambers, making it clear that the PCs face only a fraction of Xin's forces.

100 feet from the top of the shaft, the stairs and the air of the shaft itself are laced with overlapping permanent *alarms*, which alert Xin to intruders.

Creatures: The mobile shrouds of darkness are in fact Xin's favorite nightwings, which patrol the upper reaches of the shaft.

Nightshade Nightwings (4): hp 144 each; *Monster Manual* 197.

Tactics: The nightwings keep *haste* and *see invisibility* constantly active, and swoop down the shaft to engage any intruders they spot. They try to knock non-flying opponents off the stairs, and target clerics before all other opponents.

13. The Doorstep

If Xin is alerted to the PCs' presence, read the following when the PCs reach the top of the stairs:

At the top of the central shaft, the walls close in, transforming the stirs into a tunnel. A sickly green mist seems to cloak the tunnel's far end, enshrouding both the landing and the archway leading into the chamber at the top of the spire.

A DC 25 Spellcraft check reveals that the mist is *mind fog* (DC 23, CL 17). Xin placed it here to make intruders more vulnerable to his illusions. *Alarms* are set at the mouth of the tunnel and beneath the *mind fog*.

14. Xin's Redoubt (EL 21)

This immense cubical room is featureless save for the gray sand that covers its floor, the archway to the west, and the cryptic runes that ascend its walls in regular columns. Sounds are oddly distorted here, and a constant, gentle breeze seems to smooth the surface of the sand wherever it has been disturbed.

The bleak and innocuous appearance of the room is a *screen*. The walls widen 30 feet up to create a 10-foot-wide ledge. The sand, breeze, and runes covering the walls are all real, though a DC 35 Spot check reveals that the lowest 30 feet of runes are repeated until the walls reach the ceiling. Xin uses the inscriptions covering the walls as his spellbooks.

Creatures: Tenaris Xin has skin the color of charcoal and wears flowing black robes and a baldric. So long as the nightwings or *alarms* in areas **12** and **13** have alerted him to the PCs' intrusion, he floats opposite the archway just above the hidden ledge. A fiendish tyrannosaur he conjured with *shades* waits on the room's ground level, concealed by the *screen*.

Tenaris Xin **CR 21**

Male human shade wizard 9/child of night 10
NE Medium outsider
Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting 314, *Tome of Magic* 117
Init +2; **Senses** shadesight 60 ft., *true seeing*; Listen +7, Spot +19
Languages Common, Draconic, Infernal

AC 25; touch 17, flat-footed 22
hp 135 (150 with *false life*) (19 HD); fast healing 2 **DR** 10/adamantine
Immune disease, poison
Resist cold 15 **SR** 30
Fort +17, Ref +17, Will +21

Spd 50 ft.
Melee +3 *bastard sword* +11/+6 (1d10+2/19–20)
Base Atk +9 Grp +8
Atk Options shadow attack
Special Actions cloak of shadows, *control light*, dancing shadows, *invisibility*, *shadow image*, *shadow stride*, *shadow travel*
Combat Gear *staff of evocation* (48 charges)
Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 18th [CL 20th to overcome SR]; +13 ranged touch)
9th—*shades** (DC 29), *weird* (DC 29)
8th—quickened *enervation*, *horrid wilting* (DC 26), *Otto's irresistible dance*, *screen** (DC 29)
7th—*finger of death* (DC 25), *power word blind*, *project image* (DC 27), quickened *haste*
6th—*greater dispel magic*, *mislead* (DC 26), quickened *scorching ray*, *repulsion* (DC 24), *true seeing**
5th—*dominate person* (DC 23), *mind fog** (DC 23), quickened *shield*, quickened *true strike*, *wall of force*

4th—*bestow curse* (DC 22), *crushing despair* (DC 22), *Evard's black tentacles, scrying* (DC 22), *stoneskin** (2)
3rd—*fog cloud, magic circle against good, protection from energy** (3), *slow* (DC 21)
2nd—*command undead* (DC 20), *darkness, glitterdust, scorching ray, see invisibility, false life**
1st—*alarm* (2)*, *expeditious retreat, mage armor*, magic missile, shield**
0—*arcane mark, detect magic, read magic* (2)
* already cast

Abilities Str 8, Dex 18*, Con 16, Int 26*, Wis 12, Cha 12.
SQ sustaining shadows, night form, summon familiar (owl named Inkpot)
Feats Alertness, Craft Construct, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wondrous Item, Craft Staff, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Greater Spell Focus (illusion), Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (illusion), Spell Penetration
Skills Concentration +25, Hide +35, Knowledge (arcana) +31, Knowledge (the planes) +31, Knowledge (religion) +21, Listen +7, Move Silently +25, Spellcraft +33, Spot +19
Possessions *+3 bastard sword, staff of evocation, amulet of health +2, gloves of Dexterity +2, headband of intellect +6, cloak of resistance +3, lavender and green ellipsoid ioun stone* (45 charges), *ring of freedom of movement*
Spellbook as above plus; 0—all; 1st—all; 2nd—all; 3rd—all; 4th—all ; 5th—all; 6th—all; 7th—all; 8th—*dimensional lock, discern location, greater shadow evocation, mind blank, polar ray*; 9th—*dominate monster, energy drain, soul bind, wail of the banshee, wish*
*Tenaris has a +2 inherent bonus to his Dexterity and Intelligence scores

Cloak of Shadows (Su) Tenaris receives a bonus equal to his child of night level on Hide checks. His form is hazy and indistinct, giving him the concealment effect of a continuous *blur* spell. In addition, twice per day as a swift action he can gain the effects of a *displacement* spell for 10 rounds.
***Control Light* (Sp)** Xin can control light in a 100-foot radius, decreasing the amount of light in an area by up to 100%. Characters within the affected area gain a +1 bonus on Hide checks for each 25% reduction in ambient lighting.
Dancing Shadows (Su) Twice per day Tenaris can grant two creatures concealment, or a single creature total concealment, for 10 rounds. *See invisibility* does not negate these miss chances, but *true seeing* does. This is an illusion (glamer) effect.
***Invisibility* (Sp)** Tenaris can use *invisibility* (as the spell) on himself at will. This effect functions at caster level 19.
Night Form (Ex) For 1 minute per day, Tenaris can become incorporeal, gaining all the benefits of the incorporeal subtype as well as a fly speed of 40 feet (perfect).
Shadesight (Su) Xin's darkvision can penetrate even magical darkness.
***Shadow Image* (Sp)** Tenaris can use *mirror image* as the spell three times per day. This effect functions at caster level 19.
***Shadow Stride* (Sp)** As a move-equivalent action, Xin can vanish from his current location and reappear in any shadowy area within 300 feet. Xin can only use this ability once every two rounds.
***Shadow Travel* (Sp)** Once a day, Xin can either use *greater teleport* to travel to a shadowy area on the same plane, or *plane shift* to enter the Plane of Shadow.
Sustaining Shadow (Ex) Tenaris is immune to nonmagical diseases and poisons, and does not need to breathe, eat, or sleep.

Fiendish Shadow Tyrannosaur: hp 162, darkvision 60 ft., DR 10/magic, Resist cold & fire 5, SR 23; 90% real (Will DC 28 disbelief); *Monster Manual* 61.

Tactics: Xin has cast *mage armor, protection from energy* (cold, electricity, and fire), *false life*, and *true seeing*. He also spends a few rounds activating his special abilities. As soon as he is aware of characters entering his chamber, he casts *weird*, kills all light in a 100-ft. radius, and sends the tyrannosaur at them before assuming an incorporeal form and blasting them with spells. If the party sees through the *screen* concealing Xin, he casts *mislead*.

Concluding the Adventure

If she is still alive, Sesorya Girgul scrys on Xin while the PCs fight him, then attempts to ambush them as they leave, preferably in area 12 before they can escape the *dimensional lock*. If the PCs evade her, she lets them go, but recalls her minions to the Obsidian Spike and fortifies its defenses while planning an attack against the nearest city.

Whether the PCs' employer considers their mission complete depends on the PCs' degree of success. So long as High Bastion remains intact and Lacc's expansion has been halted, the city council or the sage pays up, while the huntsman only considers the job done once the land has been freed.

If Xin and Sesorya have been killed and all the gates destroyed, Lacc releases the territory it has consumed over the next few days, leaving a haunted wasteland in its wake. Should Sesorya, Xin, or any of the gates survive, Lacc's boundaries remain static or continue to expand, leaving a gaping wound in the fabric of the Material Plane.

Master of Shadows

Many of the benefits of the shade template are lost if Tenaris leaves the shadows. In an area of direct sunlight, or within the area of a *daylight* spell, Tenaris loses the following bonuses that have been incorporated into his stat block: +20 feet to his land speed, a +4 deflection bonus to his armor class, a +2 competence bonus on attack and damage rolls, a +2 bonus to his Constitution and Charisma scores, a +4 luck bonus on all his saving throws, a +4 racial bonus on Listen and Spot checks, and a +8 racial bonus on Hide and Move Silently checks. In addition, he loses his fast healing and spell resistance, as well as his *control light, invisibility*, shadesight, *shadow image, shadow stride*, and *shadow travel* special abilities.

Appendix 1: Gervas Til

Sometime after the PCs arrive in Lacc but before they encounter Heithuras for the first time, they are approached by an unexpected ally. Ideally, you should run this encounter after the PCs have finished off a patrol or a gate guardian, when their resources are somewhat depleted.

The sound of footsteps comes from the shadow of a nearby monolith, and after a moment, a hushed voice hails you in accented Common. "Well met, travelers," the speaker whispers. "You are bold to have entered Lacc, but braver souls have tried to save their worlds from Xin and failed. Will you hear the advice of one who has dwelt in this place for far too long?"

Creatures: The speaker is **Gervas Til** (N male drow wizard 10), a wizard from Balefire, the city of lanterns (detailed in DRAGON #322), who was sent by his master to spy on Xin and the Cult of the Monolith. Gervas has seen many heroes try to stop Lacc's implacable advance, but only now that the Colorless Gate has been damaged does he dare imagine that Xin's reign can be ended. He is invisible and means to warn the PCs of the danger Heithuras poses. His initial attitude is indifferent, but if the PCs shift his attitude to helpful, he offers to let them rest in his hideout, a narrow tunnel cut into one of the nearby monoliths that is warded against scrying.

Gervas is not a combat encounter, but if you need stats for him you can use the drow wizard stats on page 125 of the DUNGEON MASTER'S GUIDE.

Tactics: Gervas flees if attacked, and if he is prevented from escaping or teleporting away, he falls to his knees and begs for mercy.

Development: Though Gervas means well, the information he provides has been distorted by Sesorya Girgul, who discovered him some months ago and used *miracle* to modify his memories. Characters may well notice contradictions between the intelligence Gervas provides and that which they've gained from other sources, though Sense Motive checks and magic will reveals that Gervas believes what he is telling the PCs.

Who are you, and what are you doing here? "My name is Gervas Til, and I'm a spy. Lacc's expansion is a matter of great concern to the other powers of the Plane of Shadow, and I've been sent here to keep an eye on Xin and his fanatics."

What advice are you offering? "I presume you're here to destroy the gates and slay Heithuras. I wish you luck. Just don't let the dragon use too many of her wards; she's all but invincible with those spells on her."

Who is Xin? "Xin is the one in charge of this madhouse of a city. He leads the Cult of the Monolith, and is the only one who knows how the gates work."

Who are Xin's lieutenants? "Heithuras, Kung, and Sesorya Girgul. Xin trusts Heithuras the most, while Kung is Xin's general, though I think he's enslaved. Sesorya Girgul leads the Cult of the Monolith, but like Kung, I don't think she serves Xin by choice."

Who is Heithuras? "The nastiest shadow dragon you're ever likely to see. I wouldn't want to fight her, but it's not my home at stake, is it?"

Who is Sesorya Girgul? "A priestess of some kind. She's in charge of the security around Xin's tower."

Who is Kung? "He's the meanest nightwalker I've ever laid eyes on."

What's a shadow dragon? "Shadow dragons are made of shadow. Their breath can drain your life away, and it's nearly impossible to see them without direct light."

What are the gates? "You don't even know that? There are three gates that allow Lacc to absorb other planes. Their names are the Colorless, Empty, and Hollow Gates, and you'll need to destroy them all if you want to save your world.

Can you help us? "I wouldn't stand a chance against the likes of Heithuras and Xin. The only reason I'm still alive is that I've kept my head down. I shouldn't even have warned you about the dragon, but I couldn't stand to see another group of fools march blindly to their deaths."

Appendix 2: Sesorya Girgul (EL 19)

Once, Sesorya Girgul was poised to conquer a continent. Her alliance with the Cult of the Monolith was meant to cement her victory, but instead it ushered in disaster as Sesorya watched her world consumed by the very forces she'd thought to harness. In order to survive, she pledged herself to Xin, but her loyalty remains outstripped by her ambition.

As soon as the PCs defeat Heithuras, Sesorya sees an opportunity to dispose of Xin and claim the Obsidian Spike and the city of Lacc for herself. She approaches the PCs and claims to be the sole survivor of her world. She offers to heal the PCs and draw guards away from Xin's tower so they can infiltrate it. A successful Sense Motive check reveals she's not being entirely candid. She provides much the same information as Gervas Til (see Appendix 1), though she's hesitant to talk about herself. If her identity is exposed, Sesorya admits that the only reason she works for Xin is to see him destroyed. She does not mention her plans to rule Lacc after his demise.

If she's attacked, Sesorya casts *word of recall* to return to area **11** in the Obsidian Spike; otherwise, she heals the PCs, provides them with the location of the Obsidian Spike and the password for the elementals in area **3** ("Oblivion"), wishes them luck, then floats off on her *flying carpet* to "distract the guards."

Xin knows better than to trust Sesorya, which is why he placed her in command of his most fanatical cultists. Knowing she could not sway Xin's bodyguards, Sesorya spent years making herself indispensable while ensuring that upon Xin's demise control of Lacc would pass to her. Her intent is to allow the PCs to destroy the three gates, Xin, and her fellow lieutenants, then kill them and use Xin's army to claim their world for her own.

Sesorya Girgul is a slim, serene, dark-haired woman whose adamantine full plate is painted with white enamel. The holy symbol she wears around her neck is a small disc of white marble rimmed with gold, and a DC 40 Knowledge (religion) check reveals it as the symbol of Veoll, a god of death and magical supremacy similar to Wee Jas. Sesorya is one of the last remaining followers of Veoll in the cosmos, though she means to use Lacc and the Cult of the Monolith to spread her god's creed once Xin is dead.

SESORYA GIRGUL CR 19

Female human cleric 9/master of shrouds 10
LE Medium humanoid
Libris Mortis 46

Init +3; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., Listen +7, Spot +18

Sesorya

Languages Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Infernal

Aura *desecrate* 20-ft. radius

AC 26, touch 9, flat-footed 26

hp 127 (19 HD) **DR** 3/—

Fort +11, **Ref** +7, **Will** +20

Spd 20 ft., fly 40 ft. (average)

Melee +18/+13/+8 *+4 frost human bane morningstar* (1d8+5 plus 1d6 cold plus 2d6 vs. humans)

Base Atk +13 **Grp** +14

Combat Gear *potion of barkskin* (+5)

Special Action death touch 1/day (9d6), rebuke undead 5/day (+4, 2d6+21, 19th), *summon undead* 5/day

Spells Prepared (CL 18th, +12 ranged touch) 9th—*energy drain, implosion* (DC 26), *wail of the banshee*[D] (DC 28)

8th—*fire storm* (DC 25), *greater spell immunity, protection from spells*[D], *unholy aura* (DC 25)

7th—*blasphemy* (DC 24), *destruction*[D] (2) (DC 26), *greater scrying* (DC 24), *repulsion* (DC 24)

6th—*antimagic field*[D], *banishment* (DC 23), *greater dispel magic, harm* (DC 25), *heal, word of recall*

5th—*dispel good* (DC 22), *plane shift* (DC 23), *righteous might, slay living* (DC 24), *spell resistance*[D], *true seeing*

4th—*death ward*[D], *dimensional anchor, divination, divine power, freedom of movement, greater magic weapon**, *sending*

3rd—*deeper darkness, dispel magic*[D], *invisibility purge, magic vestment**, *prayer, protection from energy* (3)

2nd—*aid, bear's endurance, cat's grace, death knell*[D] (DC 21), *desecrate* (3), *silence* (DC 19)

1st—*bane, bless, cause fear*[D] (DC 20), *deathwatch, detect undead, divine favor, shield of faith* (2)

0—*detect magic* (3), *resistance* (2), *virtue*

D Domain spell **Domains** Death, Magic

* already cast

Abilities Str 12, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 24, Cha 14.

SQ extra rebuking, magic item use (4th-level wizard), rebuke undead, improved summoning, spontaneous casting (inflict spells)

Feats Augment Summoning, Combat Casting, Greater Spell Focus (necromancy), Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Spell Focus (conjuration), Spell Focus (necromancy), Spell Penetration

Skills Concentration +24 (+28 to cast on the defensive), Spellcraft +22, Spot +18.

Possessions *+1 frost human bane morningstar, +3 heavy shield,* adamantine full plate, *cape of the mountebank, carpet of flying* (5 ft. by 5 ft.), *goggles of night, periapt of Wisdom +6, phylactery of desecration, ring of invisibility, ring of mind shielding*

Extra Rebuking (Ex) Sesorya may use her rebuke undead ability +4 times per day, for a total of 9/day.

Summon Undead (Sp) Sesorya can summon 1 dread wraith, 2 greater shadows, 4 spectres, 4 wraiths, or 4 shadows when she uses this ability, which is otherwise identical to a *summon monster* spell with a duration of 21 rounds. This effect functions at caster level 19.

Improved Summoning (Ex) Whenever Sesorya uses her summon undead class ability, the summoned creatures gain a +2 enhancement bonus on attack and damage rolls.

Tactics: Sesorya drinks her *potion of barkskin* before combat and casts *greater spell immunity* (*horrid wilting*, power *word blind, disintegrate, flesh to stone*), *protection from energy* (fire, cold, and electricity), *spell resistance, true seeing, bear's endurance, cat's grace, death ward, aid, shield of faith, unholy aura, divine power, prayer,* and *divine favor,* then summons a pair of dread wraiths and attacks.

In battle, Sesorya supports her minions with *mass inflict critical wounds, destruction, implosion,* and *blasphemy.* She prefers to let her wraiths do most of the fighting, using *wail of the banshee* only once her minions prove inadequate.

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SOMETIMES, IT'S JUST THE DM'S FAULT

BY MONTE COOK
BY KYLE HUNTER

DMs love to complain about their players and the silly, annoying, or foolish things they do. They love to go on about how if they only could find the perfect group, their campaign would be perfect.

In the time I've spent writing Dungeoncraft, I've avoided coming right out and saying some of the things DMs do are wrong. Instead, I've tried to suggest different methods of running campaigns, attempted to present

solutions to various problems, and suggested guidelines for how to resolve conflicts in a way that would hopefully be beneficial for one's game.

Well, the truth of it is, sometimes when something goes wrong in a game, it's the DM's fault. Some things that DMs do are just plain wrong. We all make mistakes, and we all have our shortcomings. If you're a DM and you don't think you have some failings, you might want to reexamine your style and approach—or just ask your players.

Everyone has a few things they can improve on, or foibles they could try to get rid of. But sometimes, particularly for DMs that have been DMing for a long time, we grow blind to our own deficiencies. Some of the material in this article may seem a bit harsh. Some might hit a little close to home. It's not always easy to look for one's own shortcomings, and it's not always fun to have the finger pointed at you, but with great game power comes great game responsibility. So let's take a look at some of the things that DMs do wrong.

WARNING SIGNS THAT YOU'RE MAKING A DM MISTAKE

If you notice any of the following happening—particularly happening more than once—there's likely a problem on your part that needs correcting.

If the game was supposed to start at 5 o'clock and it's now 7 o'clock and the game hasn't begun, it's your fault. Even if the game hasn't started because you're waiting for a player to show up, at that point—or rather, before that point—the DM should do something to get the game going without them (you've certainly had time to think of something). Start a side adventure with the present PCs, run the missing player's character as an NPC, or have the missing player's character fall ill. Just get the game going. You're responsible for providing a game for the other players, so get to it.

If a player wanders away from the table to go watch TV, or pulls out a book to read during the session, you're likely boring him or her. If one person is bored, the rest might be as well, they're just too polite to show it. (On the other hand, if no one else is bored, it may be time to ask that player to leave, since he's clearly not having a good time, and more than likely distracting the other players who are.)

If two players are having a side discussion (and ignoring the game) or if one person is continually disrupting the game with off-topic stories, it's your responsibility to put a stop to it. The easiest and best way is to make the game compelling enough that they won't want to do it, but some players are just overly chatty or prone to attention deficit. In this case, you've got to interrupt and say, "let's get back to the game."

On a related note, if you're the one engaging in side discussions or interrupting the game with stories or comments, just stop it.

If you're spending more than five minutes with just one player while everyone else sits waiting, that's too much. Whether that five minutes is handling a character action, explaining a rule, or whatever, it doesn't matter. You're boring everyone else. Five minutes may not seem like very long, but it's forever if you're a player waiting with nothing to do. It's certainly enough time to become bored and dissatisfied.

If you find yourself saying no to just about every question the players ask, or you're spending a lot of time coming up with ways to constantly foil the players' plans, you're likely being too hard on them. Although you can't let the players run the show, you've got to let them do what they want some of the time, and they have to win some of the time or they're going to get frustrated and leave.

If the players keep wanting to have their characters wander off and do things unrelated to the adventure, they're likely not interested in the adventure you've prepared. You've got to take the players' interests to heart when preparing for the game.

If the players don't take the challenges and threats you have them face seriously, you've likely inadvertently convinced them that you'll never let anything bad happen to them. Sadly, just about the only way to fix this is to bring the proverbial hammer down and have an encounter or two really affect them adversely.

Conversely, if the players are afraid of everything, constantly check for traps even as they go to their room in the inn, and seriously over-think every move they make, you've been too hard on them. Traps can be a real problem in this regard. On the one hand, you want to spring a trap on unsuspecting PCs to provide an interesting encounter. But on the other hand, you don't want to slow down gameplay by making the PCs feel that they have to search every square foot of every floor they step upon wherever they go. The answer is to use traps in moderation, and only where they make some logical sense.

If the players are constantly asking you, "so, OK, what happens next?" or "so who's turn is it?" it probably means your pacing is too slow. Keep things moving, whether it's in the middle of a combat encounter or just in the flow of the adventure.

THE DON'T LIST

The following is a list of things to always avoid while you are DM.

Don't scarf down a handful of potato chips just before (or worse, just as) you're having an NPC give a speech or relaying important information. No one will be listening to you—they'll be too busy watching where the bits of chips you're spewing out land.

In all seriousness, be careful how you present yourself at the game table. Don't do anything during a game that you don't want 3–5 people to watch. Some DMs get so wrapped up in the game and the escapist nature of the fantasy at hand that they forget that they're still sitting there at the table. Nervously fidgeting with your dice, picking at your teeth, or wiping your nose with the back of your hand is going to be distracting and even off-putting.

Remember, too, that DMing isn't exactly like being a player, or hanging out with your friends (unless when you and your friends hang out, they all stare at you all evening). All the attention is

Know Your Weaknesses

It's always important to recognize that no DM is perfect at everything. Even you. Rather than ignore your own shortcomings, be aware of them and do something to overcome or avoid them.

For example, if you're not good at ad-libbing something that's interesting when your players go off in a direction you weren't expecting, don't do it. Instead, focus your energy on getting the PCs back on track for the adventure you have planned. Sure, some may call it railroading, but sometimes players need to be directed (subtly, one hopes) because they've just lost their way or missed a clue, not because they want to miss the whole adventure. (In fact, in general, it's often safe to assume that players would rather be participating in the adventure you have set out for them—that's why they showed up for the game.)

If you're not good at voices, come up with alternatives. Describe someone's voice or speech pattern rather than attempting it yourself. It's good to try, to practice, and to stretch your talents, but at the same time, poorly done accents and always too-silly voices (or inconsistently done voices) are a real distraction to the game.

If you're always getting the initiative order screwed up and forgetting characters in the round, use something to help—write it down, put it on cards, have each player record their individual initiative on a piece of paper that they place in front of them on the table, or just have one player be in charge of the initiative order while you handle the rest.

These are obviously just a few examples, because everyone's weak spots are different.

on you, all night long. It's more like running a meeting at work, or a very small public speaking engagement. It's worth a moment's consideration before you leave for the game—a quick look in the mirror to see what the players will be looking at for the entire evening isn't a bad idea. This doesn't mean you have to dress up or anything like that, but it does mean that if you've got a big mustard stain on your shirt, that's what people are going to be staring at for the four or five hours of the game.

Lastly, keep in mind that if you've just been to the gym, or you've been moving your friend's couch right before the game, or if it's just a hot day, when you DM you're likely to be raising your arms a lot and stretching across the table to move a miniature figure. A minimum of hygiene consideration goes a long way.

Don't let the players control the session. You control the pacing, you control when the session begins and ends, and you control what happens in the game. Don't just sit back and let the players discuss what they should do for two hours (unless there's a very good reason to do so). Control the action in the game. Ask the players for a decision when you think they've discussed things long enough. And while you're at it don't let players with forceful personalities tell the other players what to do.

Don't get distracted. Even if you're the one at the table who knows how to cook the pizza just right, let someone else do it. Stay out of the kitchen—you're running a game. You don't have time to do other things. Every moment you're not there to run the game, all of your players are sitting at the table, thinking of the things they could be doing back at home.

Don't assume everything that happens in the game is interesting. It's not. You wouldn't watch a movie that showed the main characters driving off to pick up groceries in real time in between the exciting parts—you'd expect the director to cut all that out and get right to the alien attack scene. It's the same with roleplaying games. Cut to the chase. Skip the boring stuff, even if one or more players want to play out every step of the journey through the wilderness or every interaction with every shopkeeper. The onus of good pacing is on you.

Don't facilitate poor players. If a player doesn't pay attention and is constantly making you repeat your description of places, situations, or NPC actions, at some point you've got to just stop doing it. Explain that he or she needs to keep up. If you don't, everyone else is going to get bored and frustrated listening to everything twice. Likewise, if a player's always extremely late, always disrupting the game, or always annoying the other players, it's up to you to talk to him or her, and it's up to you to ask him or her to leave if it comes to that.

Don't abuse your position. Don't make someone go get you a soda just because you're the DM (although in a perfect world, since you are the DM and have the game to manage, a player should be willing to get you a soda if you ask nicely). Don't think that being DM allows you to boss or bully the players. Don't threaten to harm someone's character to get what you want in the real world

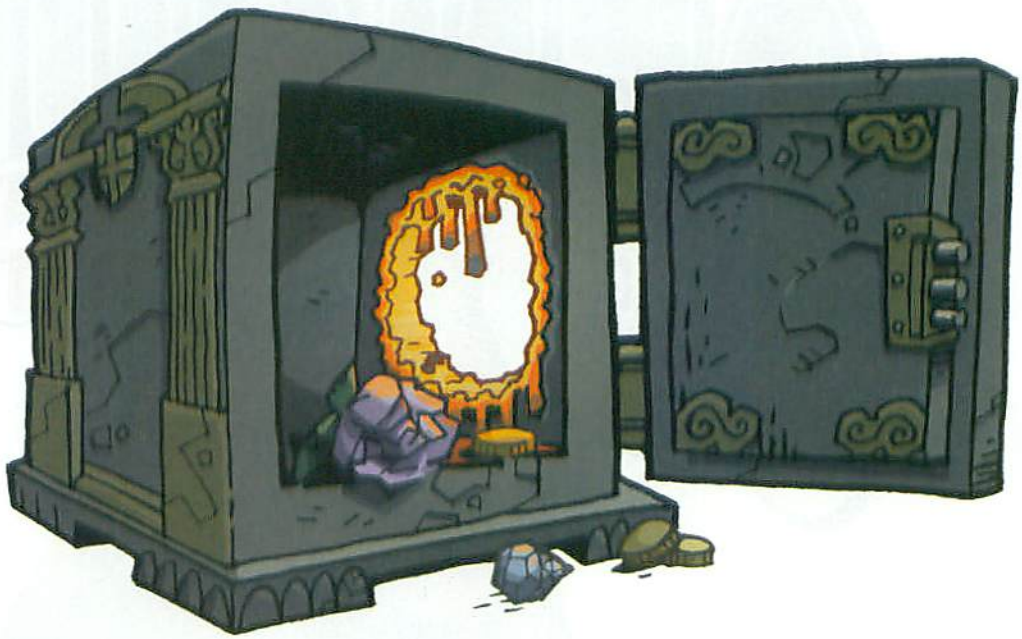
In fact, in a broader sense, don't mix the real world with the game at all. Don't give a player extra magic items because he brought brownies to the game. Don't kill off someone's character because they decided to skip the game to go to a concert and that makes you mad. Don't give your wife's character, or your brother's character, special treatment in the game, yet don't overcompensate and be unreasonably hard on them either.

Don't argue with the players. It undermines your position, creates uncomfortable situations, and distracts from the game. Table any kind of argument for after the game, or insist that all disagreements are handled in civil, levelheaded discussion. Or both.

Likewise, don't allow players to argue with each other. Cut off arguments before they start, either mediating the situation yourself or telling them to settle it elsewhere.

In either situation, during the game, regarding in-game issues, you are the final arbiter—not the rules lawyer player, the overbearing player, or even the rulebook itself. You.

Monte Cook is the author of the Dungeon Master's Guide. *Check out his publishing company, Malhavoc Press, at montecook.com.*



COMPANY OF THIEVES:

THE ORDER OF THE LAVENDER ROSE

BY ASHAVAN DOYON,
BY KYLE HUNTER,

The raucous laughter and bawdy jokes cease immediately when the door opens. Tall and rail-thin, Madam Wren enters and steps up to the table. An ebon gown clings tightly to her figure but shows no skin, and long silken gloves cover her arms. The high collar, veil, and turban conceal any hint of her face. Surveying the coins and goods arrayed on the table, she pulls the veil loose and smiles, teeth bright against charcoal skin.

"You have done well, my children," she purrs. "Very well indeed."

Theft and banditry are themes universal to any campaign world, but many thieves' guilds lack character and leadership. While its operations may seem small-time compared to a big city crime syndicate like that of Xanathar in the FORGOTTEN REALMS' Waterdeep, or the Boromar Clan in EBERRON's Sharn, a small town thieves' guild like the Order of the Lavender Rose can help you provide a higher level of detail to the small-time crooks in your game, and can perhaps even spark new adventures.

THE ORDER OF THE LAVENDER ROSE

Run by Wren Fields, the castellan of a local noble, the Order of the Lavender Rose benefits from a powerful patron who asks few questions and gets members out of trouble when necessary. Preying on outsiders and nobles, the guild recruits its members from the servitors in town—maids, cooks, and gardeners. Over the past year, the guild's profile has increased significantly, and its trademark calling card, lavender rose petals

left at the scene of the crime, has become incredibly feared. Outspoken critics of the guild have turned up dead, clutching the ominous petals in their hands.

The guild strives to remain as flexible as possible. They may steal from the PCs one day only to sell them information the next. Wren tries to increase the guild's influence whenever possible, and often uses her position and authority to manipulate events in her favor. Initially a small organization with only Wren to hold it together, the Order has grown to the point where the guildmistress has become replaceable. Wren constantly endeavors to obscure this fact, and she suspects several of her thorns of plotting against her.

THE GUILDMISTRESS

Madam Wren Fields grew up surrounded by insanity. Her father, a teamster addled in a cart accident, went to his grave eating bugs and spiders. Her current employer is ostensibly the Countess Vita al-Adora, a deranged aristocrat pretending to be a vampire. Madam Wren encourages her madness, as she finds the resulting chaos a unique complement to her guild's activities. Despite her love for the obfuscation that her employer's dementia provides, she does not tolerate such bedlam within her own organization. The Order of the Lavender Rose operates under strict rules of conduct and secrecy, its only signs the rose petals it leaves at the scene of its operations. As guildmistress of the Order, Wren's word is law.

Madam Wren Fields CR 4
Female human rogue 4
LE Medium humanoid
Init +3; **Senses** Listen +5, Spot +5
Languages Common, Elven

AC 14, touch 13, flat-footed 11; uncanny dodge
hp 12 (4 HD)
Fort +0, **Ref** +7, **Will** +2; evasion

Spd 30 ft.
Melee dagger +3 (1d4/19–20)
Ranged dagger +6 (1d4/19–20)
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +3
Atk Options sneak attack +2d6
Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds* (2), *wand of color spray* (23 charges)

Abilities Str 10, Dex 16, Con 8, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 14
SQ trap sense +1, trapfinding
Feats Alertness, Negotiator, Persuasive
Skills Appraise +7, Bluff +11, Diplomacy +12, Disable Device +5, Gather Information +10, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (local) +7, Listen +5, Open Locks +7, Profession (castellan) +5, Search +5, Sense Motive +8, Sleight of Hand +10, Spot +5, Use Magic Device +9
Possessions combat gear, daggers (3), *bracers of armor +1*, *dust of tracelessness* (2), 200 gp, 17 pp

THE UNASSUMING GARDENER

Saldore Veritet acts as the guildmistress' right hand and bodyguard. His mentor, a dashing falconer and huntsman, succumbed to a vampire's attack and became the scourge of the local countryside. Like many of the local servitors, Sal often sought guidance from Wren, who advised him above all things to stay close to her. Wren's mistress would deal with the creature his mentor had become, she assured him. Sal trusts Wren, sometimes against his better judgment, and takes great care to see that she is well protected. Trained in hunting and combat by the falconer he so admired, Sal hates all undead. He tolerates the madness of the Countess al-Adora only as an illness and a convenient smokescreen for the guild, and would gleefully drive a stake through her heart if she ever became a true vampire.

Saldore Veritet CR 3
Male human ranger 3
LE Medium humanoid
Init +5; **Senses** Listen +5, Spot +5
Languages Common

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14
hp 23 (3 HD)
Fort +5, **Ref** +4, **Will** +2

Spd 30 ft.
Melee battleaxe +5 (1d8+2/x3) or battleaxe +3 (1d8+2/x3) and kukri +3 (1d4+1/18–20)
Ranged shortbow +4 (1d6/x3)
Base Atk +3; **Grp** +5
Atk Option favored enemy +2 (undead)
Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds*, *potion of haste*

Abilities Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 10
SQ wild empathy +3
Feats Alertness, Endurance, Improved Initiative, Stealthy, Track, Two-Weapon Fighting
Skills Handle Animal +6, Hide +9, Knowledge (geography) +1, Knowledge (nature) +4, Listen +5, Move Silently +9, Profession (gardener) +5, Spot +5, Survival +4
Possessions combat gear, *+1 studded leather armor*, battleaxe, kukri, shortbow with 20 arrows, *dust of tracelessness*, small pouch of lavender rose petals, 6 pp, 15 gp

THORNS OF THE ROSE

Most members of the guild are human, with cutpurses (LE human rogue 2) and enforcers (LE human warrior 2) being the most frequently encountered. Thorns of the Rose (LE human rogue2/fighter 1) make up the guild's leadership. A council of six of these minions answers only to Wren herself.

Thorn of the Rose CR 3
Male and female human rogue 2/fighter 1
LE Medium humanoid
Init +5; **Senses** Listen +6, Spot +6
Languages Common

AC 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12
hp 15 (3 HD)
Fort +2, **Ref** +4, **Will** -1; evasion

Spd 30 ft.
Melee short sword +3 (1d6+1/19–20)
Ranged light crossbow +3 (1d8/19–20)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** +3
Atk Options sneak attack +1d6
Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds* (2), *oil of greater magic weapon* (+2)

Abilities Str 12, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 8, Cha 9
SQ trapfinding
Feats Alertness, Combat Reflexes Improved Initiative, Stealthy
Skills Disable Device +5, Hide +7, Intimidate +5, Listen +6, Move Silently +7, Open Lock +6, Profession (any one) +3, Search +5, Sleight of Hand +6, Spot +6
Possessions combat gear, leather armor, short sword, light crossbow with 20 bolts, small pouch of lavender rose petals, 7 pp, 8 gp

MAGIC MUSHROOMS

BY HAL MACLEAN
BY KYLE HUNTER

Never touched by the warmth of the sun or kissed by a gentle summer rain, the plants that call the endless, gloom-shrouded caves of the subterranean realm home must, by necessity, develop new strategies to survive and reproduce. It's in these dark grottos and tunnels that fungi, poor cousins of trees and flowers, thrive more than any other sort of life, relentlessly creeping into every available nook and cranny. Pushing and prying in their mindless way, sometimes these life forms make contact with pockets of eldritch power in the lands beneath the ground. Each of the fungi detailed below has evolved to incorporate magic into its life cycle, offering new challenges for the dungeon and treasures for those with the appropriate skills to exploit them.

CUTEDROP (CR 1)

Creeping up the walls and hanging from the ceiling, this moist black-and-green mold offers refuge to a vast phalanx of foot-long fingerlike tendrils which dangle beneath it. In a few areas, several of these tendrils seem to have merged, creating grotesquely bulging sacks that resemble knots of spider webbing.

Despite its sinister appearance, the cutedrop is one of the more benign magical fungi, relying upon a crude but effective form of empathy to increase its odds of reproduction. Every 5-foot patch of cutedrop contains 0–3 reproductive

sacks that drop to the floor whenever a sentient creature comes within 10 feet of the fungus. These sacks burst upon impact, releasing a tiny, mobile spore pod that immediately attempts to form a bond with a nearby creature. The subject must make a DC 14 Will save or become convinced that this spore pod is actually a newborn member of his own species or a pet species favored by his race (such as a kitten or a puppy) and begin taking care of it. The subject resists all efforts to separate him from the spore pod, and protects it from attack if need be. The spore pod has no means of defending itself, and any successful attack against AC 12 automatically destroys it. However, destroying it in the presence of the subject causes him to fly into a fury, requiring another DC 14 Will save to avoid attacking the individual who killed his "pet" for 2d4 rounds before coming to his senses. Once bonded, the spore pod follows the subject (with a maximum move of 30 feet) and relies upon his protection for 1d6 days before locating a suitable place to start a new patch of cutedrop.

Anyone with at least 8 ranks in Knowledge (dungeoneering) who makes his saving throw to resist the bond may immediately attempt to reverse this empathic magic, requiring a successful DC 14 Will save in order to succeed. If he makes this save he gains complete control over the seedling, allowing him to direct it as if it were an extension of his own person for 1d6 days before it dies. While under his control he gains the equivalent of a *clairaudience/clairvoyance* spell centered upon the seedling at all times, allowing him to use it to safely scout out dangerous areas. If he fails this check, however, he must then make another DC 14 Will save to avoid becoming bonded with the seedling and behaving as outlined above. If he makes this Will save, the seedling immediately collapses into a puddle of goo.

FLOATBLOAT (CR 4)

An irregular, bulging carpet of muted grays and browns stretches forward, so seamlessly blended with the underlying floor that it could easily pass for natural, unworked stone. Only a slight tremble and a phlegmatic squishing betrays its organic nature.

Passersby often find it quite difficult to notice a bed of floatbloat until standing in the middle of it (Spot DC 20), by which it time it is usually too late. Anyone traveling through a square that contains floatbloat releases countless minute magical spores that swiftly permeate clothing and attach themselves to flesh. Contact with these spores requires any subject weighing up to 400 pounds to make a DC 17 Fortitude save to avoid rising into the air at a rate of 20 feet per round. Successfully grabbing on to an anchored object halts this motion. The spores continue to provide this lifting force for ten rounds before losing their potency, at which point the subject drops, sustaining normal falling damage. If the spores lift the subject to an obstruction that blocks further movement, such as a ceiling, he suffers no damage from the impact and may pull himself along the roof in a manner similar to crawling. When the effect ends, however, he must still make a successful Climb check to cling to something or else suffer any falling damage from that height. Creatures killed by one of these falls provide nutrients for the spores, allowing a new bed of floatbloat to grow around the remains.

Anyone with at least 6 ranks in Knowledge (dungeoneering) may attempt to safely harvest some of these spores in order to create a temporary lifting effect upon objects and gear (requires a successful DC 20 Knowledge [dungeoneering] check). If this check succeeds, the character manages to harvest 1d4 doses of the spores, each dose suitable for one Medium creature (doubling the necessary dose for each size category above Medium and halving it for each size category below). Any creature enjoying the benefit of a dose of floatbloat spores gains an effective +8 enhancement bonus to Strength for the purposes of determining carrying capacity for 1d4 days. However, a failed check instead causes a spurt of spores to coat the character, making him significantly lighter for 1d4 days. During this time he is treated as if one size category smaller whenever detrimental (e.g. bull rushes or making weapon attacks) without gaining any of the benefits of a smaller size (such as the improvement to AC).

Some dungeon denizens use patches of floatbloat as natural elevators.

STEALSTOOL (CR 6)

This thin, elongated mushroom looks almost like a crimson spear, save that its heavy blue cap causes it to bend and sway, constantly tugging at the irregular, fleshy mound that serves as the anchor at its base.

Stealstools posses the ability to sense and tap into the power of magical items to provide sustenance for their offspring. A stealstool instantly detects and analyzes any magic item brought within 30 feet of it. Once each round, it may attempt to *teleport* a single magic item to any unoccupied space within a 10d10 x 100 foot radius. The owner of the item must make a DC 20 Will save to prevent this magical theft. The stealstool always selects the most potent magic item within its range (use the item's caster level as a guide), though if the owner successfuly resists the teleportation effect it moves on to the next most powerful item in the following round. Once deposited in its new location, the item offers sustenance for a new stealstool, losing all magical abilities over a course of several weeks as the plant matures. While continually functioning magic items (such as a *ring of protection* +1) remain effective until the bitter end (1d4 weeks), items with charges lose their power gradually, with one charge disappearing each day until they're depleted.

Anyone with at least 14 ranks in Knowledge (dungeoneering) may attempt to harvest the translucent magical pulp of a stealstool for his own purposes by making a DC 26 Knowledge (dungeoneering) check. If he succeeds, he gains enough pulp to coat one suit of armor or a number of smaller magical objects. Stealstool pulp temporarily preserves an item's magical energy, allowing its owner to use it for 3d4 rounds in areas that normally block the use of magic, such as an antimagic field, before succumbing. If the character fails in this skill check, however, any item that he coats with the pulp must make a DC 20 Fortitude save or lose all magical properties for 1d6 hours.

COUNTESS VITA AL-ADORA

BY ASHAVAN DOYON
BY KYLE HUNTER

Ten years ago, Countess Vita al-Adora, the only daughter of a minor noble, fell in love with a dashing visitor. Though she attempted to seduce him, all of her approaches were rebuffed. When she discovered him later that evening, fangs bared and draining the life from her maid, she lost all semblance of sanity. Vita, pampered in all things by adoring parents, fell from the study of legitimate magic into the darker arts of necromancy. In her madness, she convinced herself that her handsome paramour would accept her as a partner and mate if only she could convince him that she shared his vampiric curse.

Confronted by her parents, Vita used her burgeoning powers to subdue them, locking them deep within a secret chamber of their ancestral home. Although she ignores their screams of despair and hunger, Vita still returns now and then to speak with them. Ironically, both of her parents have since succumbed to undeath. Her mother shared Vita's mental fragility

and, faced with starvation, killed her husband and ate him. Vita's father became a ghost, and now haunts the manor with his wails, while her mother remains trapped in the secret room, transformed by her cannibalism into a ghast.

The need to appear vampiric consumes Vita. She's executed this plan so well that she often finds herself unwittingly the target of do-gooders, adventurers, and clerics determined to stamp out evil. Unfortunately for them, Vita is mad, not evil. Though she reacts to holy symbols and hisses and curses at holy water, the countess remains healthy, mortal, and human.

Despite these attacks against her, Vita strives to find the perfect balance of spellcraft and magic items that convey the appearance of undeath. She cannot be shaken from her belief that a vampiric appearance will allow her to obtain the affection of her beloved. In fact, her belief in her scheme has reached such a level that any words to the contrary cause her to viciously attack the person foolish enough to challenge her delusion.

Her castellan, Madam Wren Fields, encourages this madness. She runs a small but formidable thieves' guild from the confines of Vita's properties and knows the truth about her patron's delusions. The guild, whose calling card is a lavender rose petal, relies on Vita for a home base and protects her forcefully when necessary.

Vita takes great pains to appear to be a vampire, and has lived a nocturnal existence for several years. Her manor house lacks mirrors, and the windows were long ago boarded up to protect against the sun.

APPEARANCE

Vita dresses in elegant gowns of crimson and black that compliment her voloptuous figure. These gowns are frequently graced with voluminous sleeves that are cleverly designed to provide her with quick and easy access to a number of small items. Long black hair flows in an ebon river over her right shoulder, and a low-cut neckline reveals flawless alabaster skin. Vita wears an oddly matched assortment of jewelry and accoutrements, many of them magical. These items were chosen not for their beauty, but for their ability to help her mirror a vampire's abilities. Despite this, Vita remains a vain creature at heart, and chooses items of lesser power that match her outfit over more powerful items that don't.

TACTICS

Vita has a healthy respect for her mortality and prefers to bluff her way through situations rather than engage in physical combat. She finds do-gooders tedious and, while appearing to be a vampire remains important, she is not above using her humanity to surprise an attacker. Her necromantic abilities, though still developing, make her a formidable opponent. Vita's goal of being with her paramour never leaves her thoughts, and she often relies on Madam Wren's underlings to fight for her. Vita typically casts *false life* before presenting herself to anyone, and always attempts to cast *gaseous form* to escape if things begin going poorly for her in combat.

DEVELOPMENT

Vita's love interest remains in the area, leaving Vita to take the blame for his victims. All too aware of her intentions, he looks forward to the day when he can simply drink her dry and toss the corpse in the river. The combination of Wren's guild and Vita's necromancy worries him, however, and as such he has resigned himself to her attentions for as long as she proves a convenient scapegoat for his activities. Adept at impersonating living creatures, he might entreat the players to protect the locals from "this vampiric threat" by confronting Vita.

Players may also be brought into conflict with Vita due to run-ins with her castellan's guild. Many of the items she currently wears came into her possession by way of Madam Wren's minions, and the previous owners might hire the PCs to do some recovery work. Alternatively, Vita could be seen as a deranged but harmless patron, sending adventurers off to recover a "worthless trinket" that turns out to be a minor magical item crucial to maintaining her charade.

With her twisted web of lies and self-deception, Vita al-Adora can easily become a recurring villainess or comedic foil in any campaign. For even further complication, try waiting until the PCs believe they have the situation all figured out, then let Vita finally succeed in acquiring the vampire template.

Countess Vita al-Adora **CR 5**

Female human necromancer 5
CN Medium humanoid
Init +2; **Senses** Listen +9, Spot +2
Languages Common, Draconic, Halfling, Elven, Abyssal

AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 10
hp 19 (5 HD)
Fort +4, **Ref** +3, **Will** +6

Spd 30 ft
Melee dagger +3 (1d4+1/19–20)
Ranged dagger +4 (1d4+1/19–20)
Base Atk +2; **Grp** +3
Combat Gear *potion of cure moderate wounds* (2), *potion of gaseous form*, *wand of summon monster I* (CL 3rd, 15 charges)
Spells Prepared (CL 5th, +3 melee touch, +4 ranged touch)
3rd–*displacement*, *gaseous form*, *vampiric touch* (DC 17)
2nd–*alter self*, *false life*, *ghoul touch* (DC 16), *summon swarm*
1st–*cause fear* (DC 15), *charm person* (DC 15), *chill touch* (DC 15), *mage armor*, *obscuring mist*
0–*daze* (DC 14), *mage hand*, *message*, *touch of fatigue* (2) (DC 14)
Barred Schools abjuration and evocation

Abilities Str 12, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 18, Wis 11, Cha 15
SQ summon familiar (bat named Ruby)
Feats Alertness (when Ruby is in arm's reach), Brew Potion, Craft Wondrous Item, Great Fortitude, Iron Will, Scribe Scroll
Skills Bluff +6, Concentration +9, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (nobility & royalty) +12, Knowledge (religion) +12, Listen +9, Spellcraft +13
Possessions combat gear, 3 daggers, *gray bag of tricks*, pouch with 20 pp and 13 gp
Spellbook as above plus 0–all except abjuration and evocation; 1st–*grease*, *magic weapon*, *mount*, *unseen servant*; 2nd–*blindness/deafness*, *scare*, *spider climb*; 3rd–*suggestion*

Downer XIV

Fool's Errand

In the hope of getting Taggit resurrected, we've turned to my guild's local hall, a peepshow and novelty shop in a Zugzwang slum. Turns out a pack of itinerant neogi slavers have temporarily taken over. On top of everything else, I've come to learn Izank is not who he claims.

DOWNER TARANTULA
DROW DUELIST

ASTRID VALIANT
ELF SORCERER

BA'ROOSHA GITHYANKI
KENSAI

CONSTABLE NOLOQ
GRIMLOCK FIGHTER

"DAMN-IT-ALL" DOYLE
HALF-ELF DREAD PIRATE

PIKE ERINYES
SPYMASTER

WE APOLOGIZE FOR INTERRUPTING YOUR BUSINESS, BUT WE'VE HAD A RUN OF TERRIBLE LUCK.

WE'RE QUITE SIMPLY TRAPPED HERE, AND THIS THIEVES' HALL IS AN IDEAL TEMPORARY HEADQUARTERS.

"OUR SLAVE SHIP STRAYED FROM THE DEEP-SKY CONVOY, AND HAS RUN OUT OF FUEL. WE MADE FOR THE MOST CONVENIENT LARGE CITY TO TRADE FOR RAW MATERIALS."

SPARE ME, LADY. THEY WERE ORCS AND KOBOLD WAR REFUGEES FROM OUBLIETTE.

I EVEN GAVE THE BLOODY SAVAGES A CHANCE TO JOIN MY CREW-- MORE OF A CHANCE THAN YOU ***SO-CALLED*** ADVENTURERS GIVE 'EM.

DEALING WITH NEOGI SLAVERS, DOYLE? I'D TAKEN YOU FOR BETTER THAN THE REST OF THEM. YOU OBVIOUSLY ***FAVOR*** YOUR HUMAN SIDE.

UGH! PLEASE, NO POLITICS. WE WERE EXCITED TO RECOUP SOME OF OUR LOST PROFIT IN THE CITY'S FIGHTING PITS--

"UNFORTUNATELY, THIS BLASTED CITY HAS UNFAIRLY LABELED ALL OUR FINEST BATTLE BEASTS "ABERRATIONS", AND BARRED THEM FROM THE GAMES."

EVEN THE FLESH MARKETS ARE CLOSED TO US! SOME ABSURD CRUSADE, THE FIST OF CUTHBERT, HAS CLOSED DOWN THE SLAVE TRADE AS IT MOBILIZES.

Story and art by Kyle Stanley Hunter. Lettering by Sean Glenn. Downer is ©2005 Kyle Stanley Hunter. A Super Unicorn production. www.superunicorn.com

THE FORSAKEN RIFT
Map of Mystery
Traevantahl
Mistvale
Lake Cauldrassa
Drakebourn Sanctum
Deadfall Pass
Dragonport
North Gate
Cinderforge
West Gate
Dragonspire
The Steamwash
Wyvernwatch
Ruins of Tylfaniss
Crossing
Ruins of Nak'Chakal
The Frostwash
Demonspire
Steam Fens
Kharadad
Surface
Steam Vent
Glacial Ice
Rift Cavern
Volcano
Frostwash
Steamwash
Underground Channel
The Dark Road
CROSS SECTION
0 4 8 12 16
Miles
WEST

IF YOU ARE IN THE CITY TO FIGHT, PERHAPS WE CAN ENTER AN ARRANGEMENT. I KNOW GITHYANKI ARE QUITE FIERCE.
THIS SCARECROW? YOU'RE CROAKING ME, BOSS.
PERHAPS YOU WOULD *WELCOME* A CHANCE TO SPAR, MY DEAR?
TAKE YOUR *CLAW* OFF ME, INSECT.
HEY, THIS SOUNDS AWESOME. BUT FRANKLY, WE'RE BEAT. LET'S PICK THIS UP IN THE MORNING.
I'M CONFIDENT I CAN TAKE ANYTHING THEY THROW AT ME.
YEAH, THESE GUYS SEEM GREAT. BUT I FEEL LIKE WE WERE SUPPOSED TO BE DOING SOMETHING.
DOWNER! I BEAR WORD FROM LORD GARRIOK! COLLECT THE ULOLOK AND COME WITH ME. THERE IS TREACHERY AFOOT!
ONE FLOOR UP...
LADY ASTRID, IT'S URGENT. I FEAR OUR COMRADES HAVE BEEN DOMINATED.
I KNOW. AND I ALSO KNOW YOU ARE NOT WHO YOU CLAIM. WHAT DO YOU WANT?
AH, CLEVER LASS! MY CELESTIAL MASTERS WERE RIGHT TO PUT THEIR FAITH IN YOU.
I'M HERE TO HELP YOU.
TO BE CONTINUED